

**SECTION 3**  
Courthouse Design Criteria





**SECTION 3**  
COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

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In every building type, the basic form establishes the conceptual framework for the structure. In a hospital, the patient rooms provide the form; the playing field establishes the design foundation for a stadium, as do the galleries in a museum. In a courthouse, not surprisingly, the courtrooms give the building form even though traditionally the courtrooms account for less than 50% of the actual square footage of the courthouse. In selecting the components of the courthouse to illustrate, the courtroom is featured to emphasize the actual and symbolic role. The following components are also discussed as important contributors to the success of the building:

<b>The Judicial Set</b>	<b>Judge's Chambers, Judicial Support Staff, Jury Deliberation</b>
<b>Court Administration</b>	
<b>Court Support</b>	<b>Clerk's Office, Probation, Casework, Friend of the Court</b>
<b>Security / Holding</b>	
<b>Judicial Support Functions</b>	<b>Jury Assembly, Conference Rooms, Attorney/Prosecutor Workrooms</b>

In the following pages, a narrative discussion supported by photographs from existing facilities will be used to present design considerations more in terms of issues rather than standards for design. While the concept of "best practices" is valid, each jurisdiction brings unique local circumstances to the operation of the various components of the courthouse. The aim of this section is to broaden the level of awareness of local decision-makers about options for solving design problems. As other examples emerge from fact-finding trips, research, publications, and seminars on the design of courthouses, these should be added to this section of the document. A summary of the minimum recommended space requirements is provided at Section 3.11 beginning at page 3-62.

### **3.1 THE JUDICIAL SET**

The judicial set consists of the courtroom, jury room, a judge's private office, and staff offices immediately associated with the judge. General support spaces include a judicial conference room, attorney client conference rooms, witness waiting areas, and prisoner holding and security areas. Typically courtrooms and chambers are closely associated, even adjacent, with one another. There may, however, be situations with large multi-judge courthouses when chambers may be separated from the courtrooms by a corridor, or even on a different floor. When this occurs, depending upon the distance of separation, it is often advisable to include robing rooms next to the courtrooms where judges may hold small private conferences or conduct business during short recesses in the proceedings.



Robert A. Christensen Justice Center, Douglas County Colorado / HOK



### 3.1.1 Jury Trial Courtrooms

Within the courtroom, space is needed for the judge, court reporter or recorder, clerk, bailiff, prosecutor or plaintiff and attorney, defendant and attorney, witnesses, jurors, and spectators. Other participants on occasion may include social workers, probation officers, interpreters, police officers, and the press.

#### 3.1.1.1 Imagery and Function

The proper use of imagery, space, and an attention to the relationships between participants has a beneficial effect on behavior and enhances security within the courtroom. Furnishings and finishes need to reflect the seriousness and solemnity of the proceedings, without being heavy handed or oppressive. Judicial proceedings have a strong ceremonial component and it is proper for courtrooms to reflect judicial images in its design.



US District Courthouse, Alexandria, Virginia / Spillis Candela Architects

#### 3.1.1.2 Shape

Careful consideration should be given to the shape and layout of the courtrooms. The traditional courtroom is rectangular and deeper than it is wide. The bench is typically located in the center of the front wall but may also be slightly off-center or, in some cases, placed in the corner. Generally, a corner bench arrangement provides superior sight lines and makes more efficient use of space in the litigation area.



Circular Courtroom – State of Michigan

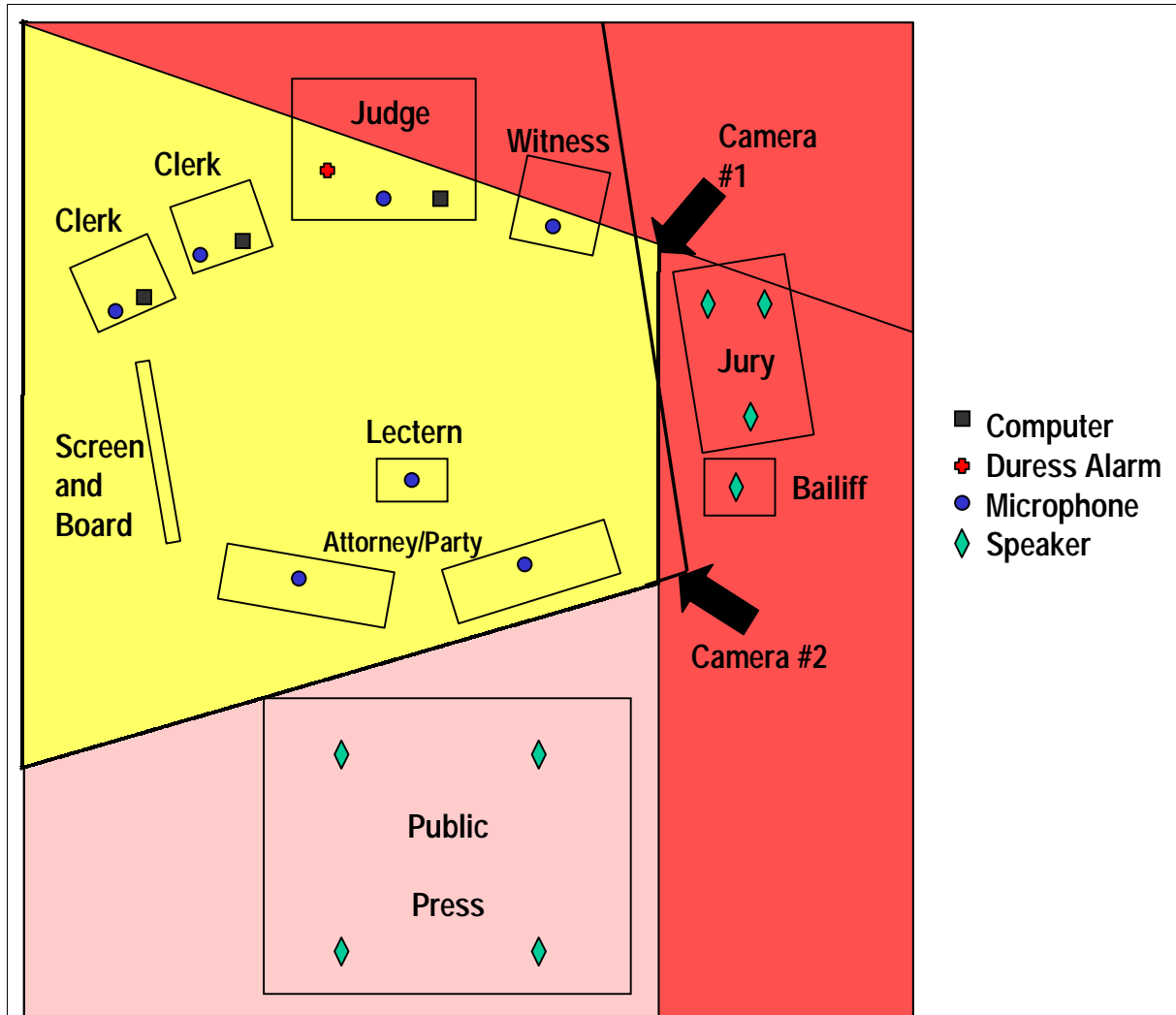
Another arrangement is the circular courtroom in which the participants (judge, witness, jury, attorneys, and clerk) are arranged in a circle. It is thought that this provides superior sight lines because all of the participants face one another across the circle. It is often criticized for its informality and often times it results in a smaller litigation area forcing parties into close proximity.

The shape of the courtroom must allow all participants to clearly see and hear one another. Wide sight angles interfere with concentration and cause physical fatigue, as participants must look back and forth.

The courtroom should be divided into a litigation (well) area and a public (spectator) area, separated by a bar or low railing approximately 30 to 36 inches in height to allow unimpeded observation of the proceedings. There should be a swing gate in the bar or railing to provide an additional psychological barrier between the well and the spectator seating. The litigation area may be rectangular with the judge's bench located along the front wall or in the corner of the room, which allows the judge a better view of the courtroom and is slightly more space efficient. Figure 3-1 illustrates the cone-of-vision from a public viewing camera. Note that the jury box is excluded from both cameras. This figure illustrates the litigation area only. The Michigan State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) recommends that there should be a secured means of exit by the judge from the courtroom or a safe area behind the bench in the event of a disruption.



Figure 3-1  
Adjacency Diagram – Courtroom Elements



Prepared by HOK for "The Courthouse: A Planning and Design Guide for Court Facilities, and used by permission of the National Center for State Courts.

### 3.1.1.3 Size

Size of a jury trial courtroom can range from about 1,300 SF to as much as 2,500 SF, depending upon the number of spectators that need to be accommodated, the size of the jury, and type of proceedings.

The depth of the litigation area is determined by the location of the jury box and the need for separation between the judge's bench and attorneys' tables. At least 10 feet should separate the bench and the litigant/counsel tables to permit other participants to see and to allow for easy circulation in the litigation area. It also serves to provide prominence to the judge and his or her role in the proceedings.





Table 3-1

Recommended Dimensions for the Litigation Area in General Jurisdiction Trial Courtrooms

Type of Courtroom	Width	Depth	Total Area
Formal Non-jury Hearing Room	28 ft.	30 ft.	840 SF
Jury Courtroom (1-Tier jury box)	32 ft.	32 ft.	1,024 SF
Jury Courtroom (2-Tier jury box)	36-38 ft.	32 ft.	1,152-1,216 SF
Jury Courtroom (3-Tier jury box)	40-42 ft.	32 ft.	1,280-1,344 SF
Ceremonial/Large Jury Trial Courtroom	40 ft.	34 ft.	1,360 SF

Courtworks, August 1999

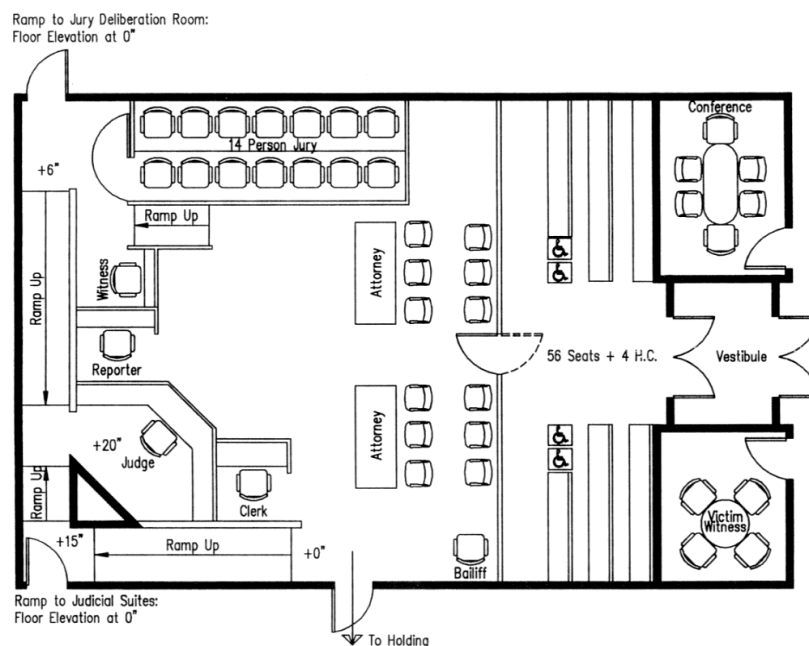
**Note:** *These figures refer to the litigation area only. An additional 10 to 15 square feet per person is required for spectator seating.*

Implementation of the Americans with Disabilities Act has required an increase in the overall size of the courtroom litigation area from previous recommendations due to the addition of ramps and wheelchair turn around area.

The width of the courtroom is determined by the size and location of the jury box. Typically a 14 person jury box with two tiers requires a 36-38 foot courtroom width. There needs to be at least a four foot separation between the jury box and the nearest litigant/counsel table. The litigant/counsel tables should be at least four feet apart also. Figure 3-2 provides an illustration of a standard jury trial courtroom with a corner judges bench.

Figure 3-2

Jury Trial Courtroom – Corner Bench





Total courtroom sizes can be obtained by adding 10 - 15 SF per spectator to the size of the litigation area.

The height of the courtroom should be proportional to the room's size for symbolic and environmental reasons, and it should provide appropriate distance from the ceiling for a judge standing at the bench. Heights typically range from 12 feet to about 18 feet depending on the size of the room. Hearing rooms of under 1000 SF can have a 10 foot high ceiling. Another way of handling courtroom ceiling heights is to have a higher ceiling over the litigation area than over the spectator seating area. This tends to more clearly define the litigation area.

#### 3.1.1.4 Environment

Acoustics should be clear, with no reverberations or echoes so that participants are able to hear the proceedings clearly. Larger courtrooms require a public address system, and most courtrooms and hearing rooms will require a sound system in order to support video or audio recording.

Courtrooms should have adequate ventilation, heating, and cooling systems with easily adjusted controls located at the bench or clerk's workstation.

Features such as soundproofing between courtrooms and surrounding spaces (particularly holding cells), double-door vestibules and/or sound locks between the public corridors and courtrooms, and carpeting reduce noise within the courtroom and are essential to a dignified atmosphere. The presence of large windows can easily transmit outdoor noise into the courtroom and interrupt proceedings.



St. Johns County Courthouse & Permitting Center, Florida / Spillis Candela Architects



Robert A. Christensen Justice Center, Douglas County, Colorado / HOK

Generally, the front wall of the courtroom may be constructed of reflective materials to enhance the sound from the well area, while the back wall should be covered with sound absorptive materials to reduce noise generated by spectators. The floor should be finished with carpet or padded vinyl to reduce noise.

While natural lighting is often desirable for psychological reasons, courtrooms containing exterior windows can suffer from sunlight shadowing and dappling effects, heating and cooling complications, reduced security, exterior noise, and visual distractions. If the location of the courtrooms permit, skylights are an excellent source of natural light without the problems presented by windows. The use of skylights should consider the impact of light on evidences and testimony presentation.





### 3.1.1.5 Adjacencies and Circulation

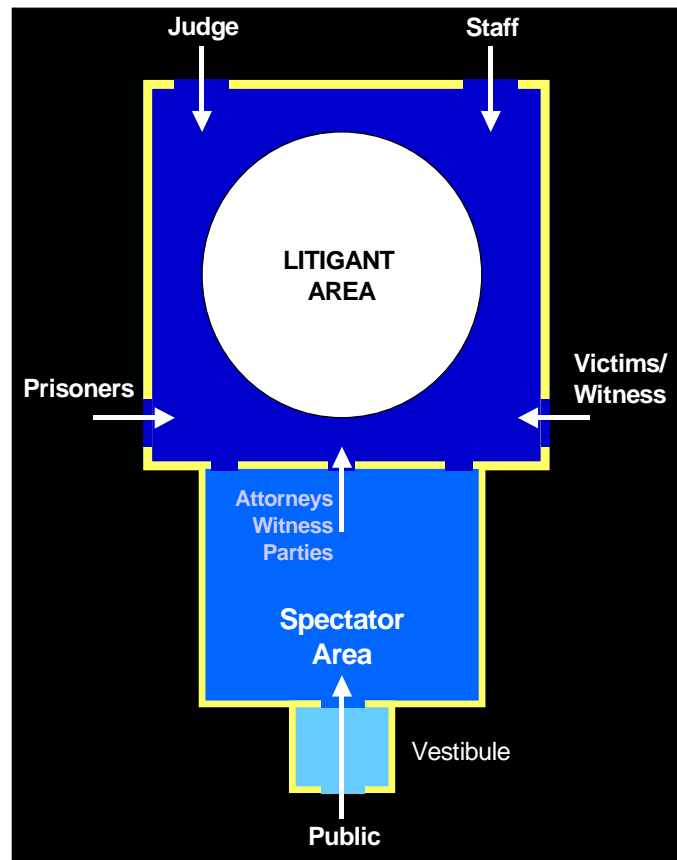
The courtroom is an interface area where the public, private, and secure circulation systems converge. The courtroom should be easily accessible from the courthouse's main public entrance using the main public circulation system. Judges and court staff should be able to reach and enter the courtroom using the building's private circulation system.

As shown in Figure 3-3 prisoners should enter directly from a secure holding area adjacent to the courtroom.

When entering the courtroom, prisoners and defendants should not be escorted near the public, jurors, or witnesses. Generally, prisoners should enter the courtroom from the opposite side of the courtroom from the jury. Likewise, jurors should not have to pass near the defendant or the public when entering or exiting the courtroom. Jurors should be able to exit the courtroom immediately from the jury box and enter the deliberation room.

The spectator seating area often serves at the waiting area for litigants prior to their case being called. The seating area should be adequate to accommodate projected peak volume, particularly if additional waiting areas are not readily available adjacent to the courtroom. Controlled movement into and out of the well and litigant/counsel tables should be spacious enough to expedite efficient case processing.

Figure 3-3  
Courtroom Access Diagram



Prepared by HOK for "The Courthouse: A Planning and Design Guide for Court Facilities", and used by permission of the Nation Center for State Courts.

### 3.1.1.6 Accessibility

All courtrooms should be accessible to persons with disabilities and comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG). The guidelines define minimum requirements for accommodation of persons with disabilities that must be applied during the design, construction, and alteration of public and commercial facilities. More information on the Act and the guidelines may be obtained from the United States Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, 111 18<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 501, Washington D.C., 20036-3894, (202) 653-7834, (202) 653-7863 (fax).

Areas of the courtroom that need to be accessible are the spectator seating, the witness stand, and counsel tables, as well as staff workstations. When entering the courtroom, prisoners and defendants should not be escorted near the public or witnesses. A general rule to apply in determining whether a space needs to be accessible is that a person with a mobility disability should be able to enter and reach every space by the same path followed by everyone else.



The witness stand and first tier of the jury box should be at the same height and at floor level to avoid the necessity of installing ramps in the litigation area. Space should be allowed in the jury box and witness stand for a wheelchair. (See Section 3.1.2.6 on accessibility for discussions of other accessibility issues.)

#### *3.1.1.7 Security*

Architecturally, security is provided through the clear separation of circulation routes for courtroom participants, the elimination of spaces where a weapon or bomb might be placed, and the elimination of posts or pillars in the courtroom behind which someone might hide. Technologically, the courtroom can be made more secure through the use of bullet-absorptive material to shield the judge's bench and the clerk's and reporter's desks, the installation of duress alarms connected to the courthouse's central security station, and the use of video monitors. Video monitors for security purposes may be hooked into the video recording systems and activated when the duress alarm is activated. The SCAO recommends that bullet absorption materials should meet National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Technology Standards of Type III-A or Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standard of Level 3. These standards would protect against standard test rounds for 44 magnum and submachine gun 9mm. This level provides protection against nearly all handgun threats. Additional protection may be derived from the addition of ¼ inch steel plate.

SCAO also recommends that each courtroom allow for some form of shielded or secured exit for the judge in the event of a courtroom disruption.

#### *3.1.1.8 Furnishings and Finishes*

Generally, the colors and tones of the walls and ceilings should promote a dignified, calm atmosphere in the courtroom. Furniture and finishes should be comfortable, sturdy, durable, vandal-resistant, and easy to clean.

Draperies, or other window coverings, should be used if the courtroom has windows. Seats, benches, and chairs should be comfortable and easy to maintain. Space should be provided to display flags and state seal.

Every effort should be made to minimize loose items in the courtroom that could become potential weapons in the event of a disturbance. Additionally, the courtroom should be furnished to minimize hiding spaces for any type of contraband and insure efficient security searches.



52<sup>nd</sup> District Court, Michigan / Thomas Strat & Associates

### **3.1.2 Courtroom Technology**

Today's courtrooms need to be fully capable of handling the full-range of court technology applications from the use of office automation technologies, automated case and financial management systems, video conferencing for arraignments and remote testimony, access to on-line legal research and legal databases, evidence presentation systems, video and audio recording for taking the record, security, and accessibility.



As a general rule, electrical receptacles, data lines, and phone lines need to be installed at the bench, clerk's station, litigant/counsel tables, bailiff's station, court reporter or recorder station, and witness stand. Additionally, the jury box needs to be capable of the installation of video display monitors.

An electrical engineer or other electrical or computer consultant should assist with the design and installation of such equipment. All receptacles should be flush-mounted in the floor.

A telephone may be installed for emergency communications and for holding telephone hearings. All equipment should be recessed into the millwork if possible to avoid blocking the judge's view of the courtroom. The courtroom should have an electrical equipment and storage closet for the storage of computer equipment, VCRs, and other switching devices.

#### *3.1.2.1 Court Reporting - Audio and Video Equipment*

While many courts may continue to use live court reporters for taking the record, the use of electronic audio and video recording and playback equipment for the purposes of taking the court record is becoming common. All courtrooms should be equipped with video and audio recording and play back capabilities. Because there may still be times when a court reporter is needed, as in the case of real-time transcription, all courtrooms also should be equipped with a station for court reporters, with necessary electrical outlets, data line, and audio hook up.

Microphones and video cameras should be controlled by the judge. Microphones should be located at the bench, clerk's workstation, witness stand, lectern, jury box, and litigant/counsel tables. A space of 35 to 70 square feet should be provided in the well for the court reporter. A separate workstation or office of 100 to 120 square feet in the judicial set should also be provided. The court reporter / recorder should be located to have an unobstructed view of the bench, litigant/counsel tables, and witness stand. The courtroom location should also facilitate recording of "side-bar" conferences at the bench.

#### *3.1.2.2 Video and Tele-communications*

In addition to video cameras for the purpose of taking the record, video conferencing equipment should be planned and installed for purposes of video arraignments, preliminary hearings, and other non-adjudicatory hearings. Video conferencing may also need to be available for remote witness testimony. Video display monitors should be located at the bench, witness stand, litigant/counsel tables, and jury box. Controls should be located at the clerk's station and the judge should have the capability of cutting the sound and transmission to the witness, jury, and attorneys.

#### *3.1.2.3 Office Automation and Case Management Systems*

Installation of personal computers, as part of a larger court Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN) should be planned for the bench, court clerk's station, and court reporter's station. An effort should be made to recess the clerk's and judge's monitor into the mill work in order to make it more attractive and save space. Additionally, data and phone lines should be installed at the witness stand and litigant/counsel tables along with adequate electrical outlets.

Judges may want to make use of notebook computers with a docking station located in their chambers and on the bench instead of a desktop personal computer.



#### 3.1.2.4 Legal Research

On-line legal research is becoming common and is replacing the need to maintain large sets of books. Both judges and attorneys may wish to make use of this capability during trials. This can be accomplished with personal desktop computers or notebook computers with a modem and phone line. Data and phone lines should be installed at the bench and litigant/counsel tables for this purpose.

#### 3.1.2.5 Presentation Systems

Evidence display systems are becoming more equipment dependent as attorneys are making greater use of videotapes of crime scenes and depositions, computer animation, document imaging, and other automated presentation applications. Not only does a TV and VCR (and DVD player) need to be available for viewing video tapes, but consideration needs to be given to the installation of a computer projection device and large project screen for viewing computer generated displays. Greater use also is being made of compact disks for storing imaged documents and other types of evidence. Attorneys need to be able to display this evidence either on a large projection screen or individual video display monitors. Many courts are also installing electronic evidence display equipment that not only displays physical evidence, using computer projectors, but also displays scanned documents and images, word processing documents, automated spreadsheets, and other computer generated documents.

A large projection screen should be installed in the courtrooms for the display of overhead transparencies, slides, video projections, and computer display projections. Courtrooms should have access to an electronic evidence display system, such as produced by DOAR or ELMO. This could initially be provided on a movable electronics cart so that it could be shared by all courtrooms. Later as the use of electronic displays increases, separate systems might be permanently installed in each courtroom.

Video display monitors should be located at the bench, court clerk's station, witness stand, jury box, and litigant/counsel tables. An effort should be made to provide a large screen display monitor that can be viewed by the public.

#### 3.1.2.6 Accessibility Systems

All courtrooms should be equipped with sound amplification equipment for the hearing-impaired. The equipment also permits the playback of audio exhibits. The master controls should be located at the bench. At least one-half of the courtrooms (but not less than one courtroom) or hearing rooms of each type should have a permanently installed assisted listening system. Four percent of the occupancy load of the courtrooms should have receivers (but not less than two receivers). Placement of the devices should include the jury box, spectator area, litigant/counsel tables, and witness stand.

Other accessibility systems or services include:

- Audio enhancement
- Real-time transcription
- Interpreting services
- Environment Controls
- Sound amplification systems



Courtrooms over 1,000 SF need audio amplification to permit the judge, jurors, litigants, and public spectators to hear clearly and understand the participants. Instead of hard surfaces in the courtrooms, soft acoustic surfaces are necessary with audio systems.

Sound reinforcement systems consist of microphones, electronic mixers, signal processors, amplifiers, and loudspeakers. The sound system should be designed to operate automatically with automatic mixers controlling microphones (turning on microphones, which are being spoken into). Microphone switches should be provided at each microphone, which will function as Off-Auto. Automatic volume controllers should be used to help compensate for variations in voice levels and microphone distances. Systems should also be provided with electronics equalization to compensate for the acoustic properties of the finished courtrooms, speakers, and microphones. The master controls should be located at the clerk's station and judge's bench and should include a power switch, master volume control, and override controls.

#### *3.1.2.7 Lighting Controls*

Normal room lighting should be augmented by incandescent task lighting directly above the bench, clerk's station, and litigant/counsel tables. Ideally, preset controls for lighting the entire courtroom are located at or near the bench. Generally, 30 foot-candles should be available in the spectators seating area, and 70 foot-candles in the well areas

#### *3.1.2.8 Security*

Duress alarms should be installed at the bench, clerk's station, and bailiff's station. Additionally, the bailiff should have access to a phone with a silent ring. The use of video cameras for security surveillance is encouraged. The cameras should be activated by the duress alarms and should be monitored at the building's central security station. If cameras are installed for court reporting and or video conferencing purposes, the same system may be used for security purposes.

#### *3.1.2.9 Other Equipment*

Electrical outlets need to be planned for the litigant/counsel tables, jury box, clerk's station, bench, court reporter / recorder station and the bailiff station. A minimum of one quadriplex outlet is required, but at the bench and clerk's station, there should be at least two quadriplex outlets.

### **3.1.3 The Judge's Bench**

The judge's bench which reflects the dignity and authority of the judiciary needs to be raised so that the judge can see, hear, and address all courtroom participants.

The size of the bench should be proportionate to the size of the courtroom.

The bench should be raised at least two risers (14 inches) above the floor. While seated, the judge's eye level should be higher than that of a standing person of average height.

If at least six feet of space is allowed behind the judge's desk, the judge can move freely for side-bar conferences, reach for reference books, and easily enter and exit the bench. Space should allow for the future installation of a ramp or lift for wheelchair access.





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The front panel of the judge's desk should be shielded with a bullet-absorptive material. The Michigan SCAO recommends that bullet absorption materials should meet National Institute of Justice (NIJ) Technology Standards of Type III-A or Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standard of Level 3, which would protect against standard test rounds for 44 magnum and submachine gun 9mm. This level provides protection against nearly all handgun threats. Additional protection may be derived from the addition of ¼ inch steel plate.

It is desirable to have some barrier, such as an ornamental rail, along the front of the bench to prevent an attorney or other individuals from approaching too close to the bench and from being able to read documents or notes on the judge's desk top. The bench should also have a privacy rail along the front of the bench.



52<sup>nd</sup> District Court, Michigan / Thomas Strat & Associates

Several drawers should be provided for forms, supplies, and personal items, as well as a bookcase for legal reference books.

The bench should facilitate the transfer of documents and verbal communication with the court clerk and court reporter, as well as provide clear lines of sight to the witness.

Normal room lighting should be augmented by task lighting located directly above the bench.

The judge's bench should have a concealed, silent, supervised duress alarm that will directly alert courthouse security in the event of an emergency. In the event of a disruption, the Michigan SCAO also recommends designing a second means of exit for the judge from the courtroom or a safe area behind the bench.



Charlotte County Justice Center, Punta Gorda, Florida / Spillis Candela DMJM Inc.

A minimum of two quadriplex electrical receptacles, two data jacks, two audio jacks, two phone lines, and a built-in video display monitor and desktop computer, should be installed at the bench in all courtrooms. All receptacles should be flush-mounted.

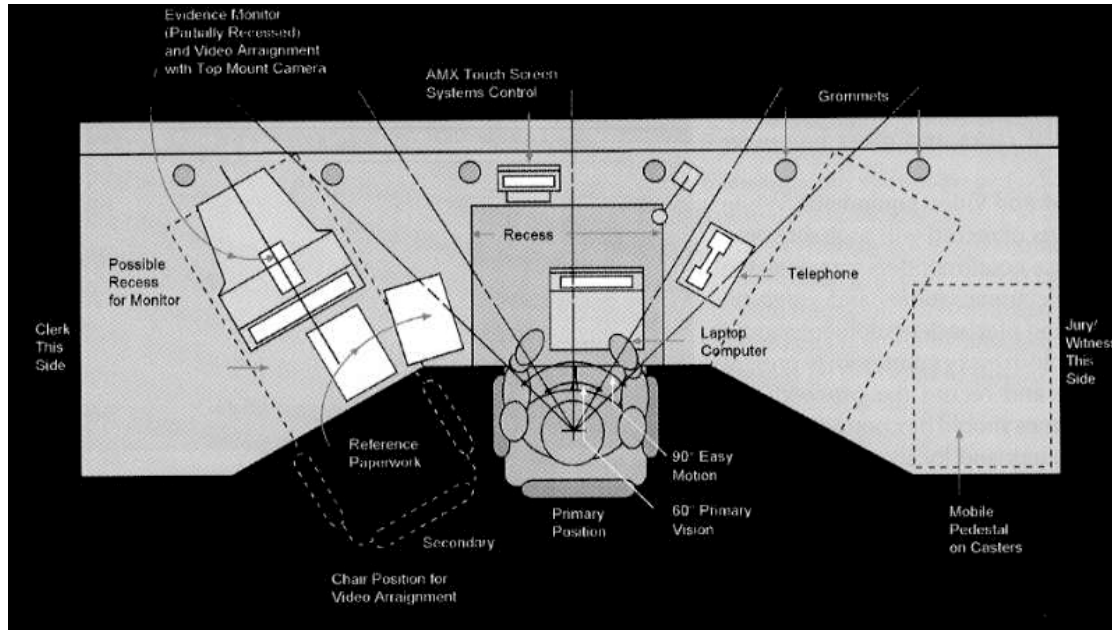
The bench should be equipped with a microphone connected to an amplifier controlled by the judge or the clerk. There should also be an intercom system connected to the judge's chambers and a phone with a silent ring should be installed at the bench. Controls for video or audio recording equipment also need to be provided.







Figure 3-4  
Judge Bench Plan



Clark County, Nevada, Regional Justice Center Reports. Used courtesy of "The Courthouse: A Planning and Design Guide for Court Facilities", NCSC

### 3.1.4 Clerk's Station

The court clerk helps all court proceedings run efficiently through a variety of tasks, including checking case files and recording appropriate case dispositions. In this capacity, the clerk frequently needs to pass files to and from the judge and requires immediate proximity to the judge.

The clerk's station should be compatible with the style and finishes of the judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.

The clerk should be elevated on one riser. An elevated station eases the transfer of documents to the judge and presents a better view of the courtroom.

The court clerk's work surface should be large enough to accommodate the case files exhibits, supplies, forms, work papers, and a personal computer with video display monitor and keyboard. Space should also be provided for a silent printer and scanner. The counter should be approximately 30 inches in depth and 48 inches in length. Approximately 30 to 40 square feet are required for a single clerk's workstation.

The court clerk's station should have the same amount of task lighting as the judge's bench.

There should be sufficient space to install a ramp or lift in the future should the need arise. A ramp must have a slope of no greater than a 1-foot rise over 12 linear feet and cannot rise more than 30 inches without a 5-foot level landing.

The court clerk's station may have the same duress alarm/intercom system as the judge, providing direct linkage with the central security station.



There should be storage areas, either desk drawers or pigeonholes, for forms and paperwork. There should also be an inconspicuous, lockable storage area where evidence and trial materials may be stored during recesses.

Lighting and other environmental controls should be located at the clerk's station. The court clerk's station should have at least two quadriplex electrical receptacles which are flush, floor-mounted, a two-telephone jack, two data lines, and a built-in computer display monitor. The computer terminal should be equipped with a silent keyboard and laser printer. The control console for the sound amplification system and any audio or video recording system may be located at the court clerk's station, along with a microphone.



Denton County Court Building, Texas / Phillips Swager Associates

### 3.1.5 Witness Stand

During trials the witness is the focal point of the courtroom, since most evidence is presented through testimony. All courtroom participants should clearly hear and see all verbal and nonverbal communication from the witness. The location of the witness stand is critical. The two most common locations are between the judge's bench and the jury box, and the other is directly across from the jury box.

The witness stand should be compatible with the style and finishes of the judge's bench and other courtroom furniture. It should have a modesty panel in front and enough room inside for a person to enter and exit without tripping. Additional space, either inside or outside, should be provided for an interpreter.

The witness stand may be elevated on one or two risers from the floor but should remain lower than the judge. Many courtrooms are now being designed with the witness sitting at floor level in order to avoid the necessity of a ramp or lift for accessibility. The witness should be clearly visible to the judge, jurors, and attorneys. Too often the view from one of the litigant/counsel tables is obscured by the bench. If the witness stand is not constructed as part of the bench, it may be constructed as a movable, modular unit, allowing it to be rotated to better face the judge in non-jury trials. A module ranging from 50 to 80 square feet can accommodate a wheelchair in the witness box.

Because witnesses must frequently receive, examine, and return exhibits, a desk area or shelf approximately 15 to 18 inches deep should be provided at the front or side of the stand. This shelf area also ensures an adequate non-encroachment distance between the witness and attorneys.

The area around the witness should be well lit so that the judge, jurors, and attorneys can clearly see the witnesses' expressions, but the light source should not be so direct as to cast shadows or glare.

The witness stand in all courtrooms should be accessible to persons with a disability. It should accommodate a wheelchair space, located within the defined area of the stand. The accessible path must coincide with the normal circulation path to the witness stand, and a permanent ramp or lift is required if the position is raised above floor level. A 30" x 48" (or 10 square feet) wheelchair space is required with an unobstructed turning diameter of 5 feet.

The witness stand may be located in a number of different positions. The most common arrangement is for it to be placed between the jury and the judge, adjacent to the court reporter's station; this provides the



proximity necessary for the witness to be seen and heard clearly. Other possible placements are opposite and facing either the judge or the jury box. The witness stand should be no closer than seven feet from the nearest seated juror. This will lessen any feelings of intimidation jurors may have due to their proximity to a criminal defendant or an antagonistic witness. This distance also facilitates movement between the witness stand and jury box and is particularly important for handicapped jurors in wheelchairs. If located next to the judge, the witness stand should not allow the witness to seize objects from the bench, and there should be a physical barrier between the witness and the judge.

The exhibit area for projection screens, chalkboards, and television or video monitors should be close to the witness stand for ease of reference and demonstration. The exhibit area might be placed between the witness stand and the jury box for ease of viewing by both the witness and jurors.

In most situations, entry to the witness stand is through the litigation area from the spectator-seating area. When not testifying, witnesses in controversial or emotional trials may be isolated or excluded from the courtroom in victim/witness rooms adjacent to the courtroom. In this case the witness may enter the witness stand from the courtroom's private staff entrance.

The witness chair should be affixed to the floor to ensure control of prisoners who must testify. To protect the judge from actions of a hostile witness, some physical separation should exist between the witness stand and the judge's bench.

The witness chair should be stationary to prevent witnesses from backing away from the microphone. Chairs with swivel seats are preferable but should be comfortable and quiet. A modesty panel should be provided.

There should be electrical receptacles and connections for installation of built-in video display monitors for recorded evidence, taped depositions, electronically displayed evidence, and for instant review of real-time case transcripts.

An adjustable microphone should be securely and unobtrusively mounted in the witness stand and be able to receive clearly the testimony of children and soft-spoken witnesses. The microphone may be connected to an amplifier controlled by the judge or clerk.

### **3.1.6 Jury Box**

Jurors should be afforded the comfort and courtesies appropriate to their role. They need be present and alert for long hours, often over several days. They should be protected from public contact, harassment, and intimidation. Although jury service is a civic duty, jurors often serve at great personal sacrifice.

The jury box should be compatible with the style and finishes of the judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.

The first row of seating is traditionally elevated on one riser, and the second row elevated on two risers. This gives the jurors a little better view of the witness and the



Dakota Co. Courthouse, Minnesota / Wold Architects



judicial proceedings. Because of the need to make all jury boxes handicapped accessible, an option is to put the first tier at floor level, equal in height to the witness stand (the witness stand must also be at floor level — if one is raised so must the other). This eliminates the need to install a ramp or lift in the jury box.

The jury box should accommodate all jurors plus two or more alternates. The standard jury box for circuit court should accommodate 12 jurors and 2 alternates in order to provide maximum flexibility for present and future trials. For district/probate courtrooms, a 6 person plus 2 alternates jury box should be provided. Seating placement can vary, but a two-tiered configuration is usually most efficient. Space should be provided for a handicapped juror either with an open space on the end of the first row or by removing the first juror's chair.

The jury box should allow 10 to 12 square feet per juror, this provides adequate space for a minimum of 18 inches of legroom between the rows and the modesty railing. The modesty railing/panel should be high enough to shield the lower level of jurors.

A 14-person jury box would typically be 19 to 21 feet long and 9 feet deep. The total requirement for a 14 person jury box is approximately 140 to 168 square feet, for an eight-person jury box, 80 to 96 square feet.

Although a district/probate court jury box (maximum 8 jurors) would be smaller than the circuit court jury box (maximum 14 jurors), for future flexibility, planning all jury box areas to seat 14 jurors should be carefully considered.

A nine- or ten-inch shelf may be desirable as part of the jury box for holding documents and exhibits, and to ensure a non-encroachment distance between the jurors and attorneys. Jurors must be able to hear and see the judge, witnesses, and attorneys clearly. They should have unobstructed sight lines to the judge, witness, litigant/counsel tables, and exhibit area. Lighting should be of standard courtroom intensity.



Orange County Justice Center, Florida / HLM Architects

The jury box should include one accessible wheelchair space located within the defined area of the jury box; access to this wheelchair space should coincide with the circulation path provided for all persons using the jury box. If this wheelchair space is located on a tier within the jury box, a permanent ramp or lift located on the circulation path used by all jurors may be used to access this space.

It may be more efficient to leave the first tier of the jury box at floor level, particularly if a three-tier box is to be used. Audio jacks for earphones or other assistive listening devices should be available for use by the hearing impaired.

The jury box should be situated so that the litigant/counsel tables, witness box, judge, and audiovisual exhibit area are in full view. The jury box is best located on the same side of the judge as the witness box, and it should not extend past either the witness box or the litigant/counsel tables, so that there is at least a 90-degree view of all participants. All jurors should be able to see witnesses and attorneys as nearly full-face as possible.

The jury box should be far enough from the spectator area to prevent any physical or verbal contact. Seven feet should be allowed from the center of the first juror's chair to the bar separating spectators from the





litigation area. A bailiff's station may be located between the jurors and the spectators to prevent any communication.

Jurors should be far enough from the attorney's tables to prevent eavesdropping—a minimum of 4 feet to the table and 6 to 8 feet to the nearest attorney's chair. Jurors should not sit with their backs to the spectators since this tends to make the jurors uncomfortable and can cause distractions as jurors turn to see who may be entering or leaving.

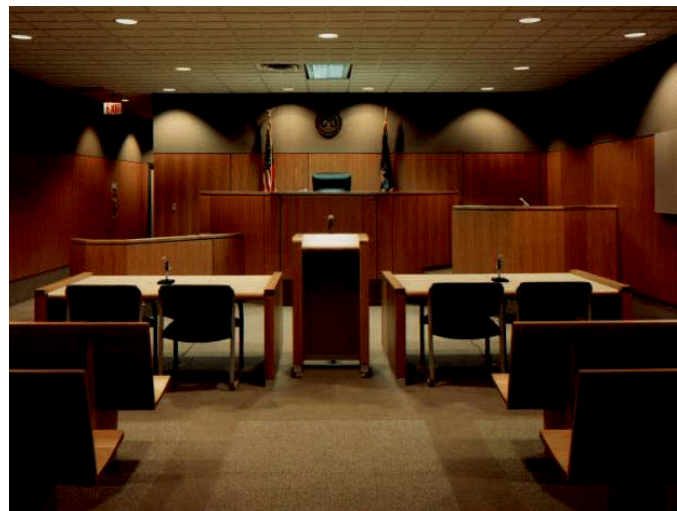
Jury seats should be fastened to the floor; they should swivel but not rock and should be spaced approximately 30 to 33 inches apart, not closer than three-and-a-half feet back-to-back. Chairs should have armrests and be constructed to lessen juror fatigue during long periods of sitting with adequate back support and legroom. A foot-rail may be desirable. Wall surfaces behind the jurors should be easily cleaned.

The jury box may be equipped with electrical receptacles and connections for built-in video display monitors for viewing taped evidence, depositions, and instant review of case transcripts. A microphone should be placed near the jury foreman position.

### **3.1.7 Litigant / Counsel Tables**

A minimum of two litigant/counsel tables (defense and prosecution) should be provided in the litigation area. Additional tables may be needed in multi-defendant trials. Each table should accommodate two to four people, including attorneys and litigants. Attorneys often require a great deal of work surface for large legal books, documents, notes, evidence, and equipment such as notebook computers. Attorneys and litigants should be able to confer in private without being overheard. Attorneys should be able to move easily in the litigation area and be able to approach a lectern or other courtroom participants.

The litigant/counsel tables should be compatible with the style and finishes of the judge's bench and other courtroom furniture.



42<sup>nd</sup> District Court, McComb County, Michigan / Thomas Strat & Associates

There should be a four foot separation between the litigant/counsel tables, and they should be positioned to reflect equal status. The tables should never be connected in order to facilitate private litigant/counsel communications and to decrease the potential of violence between the parties. The tables should be movable. A modesty screen should be considered if prisoners are ever shackled in the courtroom or if some type of discreet prisoner restraint is used.

The litigant/counsel tables should be at least seven feet long and three to four feet wide to accommodate the necessary work materials. The area of each litigant/counsel table, including counsel chairs and two-foot movement space behind the chairs, should be approximately 50 to 80 square feet.

Attorneys should be able to see and hear all courtroom participants clearly. The tables should face the bench and provide a full view of the judge, court reporter, witness, and jury.





The general courtroom lighting should be augmented with direct incandescent task lighting. Glare or reflection on the tables should be reduced. While there are no national accepted standards, it is recommended that the well area have a minimum of 70 foot-candles and the spectator seating area should have a minimum of 30 foot-candles.

The litigant/counsel tables should be accessible with adequate access to the work area and maneuvering room behind the tables. Microphones need to be movable or be able to pick up the voice of someone in a wheelchair. Sufficient space to move litigants/counsel to and from the spectator seating area and the counsel tables also increases efficiency in the court operations.

To prevent private conversations from being overheard or documents from being read, litigant/counsel tables should be four to five feet apart and approximately six to eight feet from the nearest juror or spectator.

A distance of 10 to 16 feet is required from the front of the judge's bench to the front of the litigant/counsel tables. This distance creates symbolic separation and dignity while forming an area within which attorneys may move. It also provides space for additional litigant/counsel tables if necessary.

The back edge of the litigant/counsel table should be aligned with, but not ahead of, the end of the jury box. This ensures that no juror is out of the attorney's field of vision, an important factor during the questioning of witnesses. In a six-person jury courtroom, the front edge of the counsel table should be aligned with the end of the jury box.

The distance between the back of the counsel chairs and the bar should be approximately five to six feet to accommodate an additional row of chairs or benches along the railing for staff, paralegals, or others involved in the case.

The primary access of attorneys and parties to the litigant/counsel tables should be from the public circulation corridor and through the public seating area. Another point of access would be the entry for persons in custody from a secure corridor.

The tables should not have drawers or concealed recesses where a weapon or bomb may be placed. Furniture should be of sufficient weight that it couldn't be picked up and used as a weapon. The chairs provided for the parties may be swiveling armchairs with casters.

The tables should not have glossy finishes that may reflect light and create glare on the writing surface.

Electrical receptacles and wiring conduits for built-in video display terminals should be provided for the purpose of accessing on-line legal databases, reviewing taped depositions, video display evidence, exhibits, and case transcripts. Each litigant/counsel table should have two data lines, two voice lines, and at least one quadriplex electrical outlet. All outlets should be flush floor-mounted. Each table should have one audio jack for a microphone connected to the sound amplification system and video recording system.

### **3.1.8 Lectern**

A movable lectern with a microphone may be provided. If use of a lectern is required by the court, the court should provide either an adjustable lectern (or portion of) or a fixed lectern with the counter or desk height between 28" and 30" above the floor, and knee space at least 27" high, 30" wide and 19" deep. In addition to this accessible portion of the lectern, it may contain a non-accessible counter or desk at approximately 28" to 30" high for seating and 42" for standing positions. A 30" x 48" clear floor shall be provided at each accessible lectern. A movable lectern which is designed to be accessible to someone in a wheelchair can be provided within the courts facility and moved to a particular courtroom when needed. Such a lectern is commercially available for purchase.



Task lighting may be provided to aid in reading. The lectern should be easily accessible from the litigant/counsel tables and should not interfere with the view of the proceedings by the litigants or the jurors.

### 3.1.9 The Bailiff's Station

The bailiff is responsible for the security of the courtroom and all participants, maintains order in the courtroom, and removes disruptive persons from the court. Additional responsibilities may include announcing the entry of the judge, escorting witnesses to and from the witness box, escorting jurors to and from the jury box, and handling heavy or hazardous evidence. The number of bailiffs assigned to a courtroom often depends on the type of case. A space standard of 12-25 square feet in the courtroom is adequate.

While the bailiff often moves about the courtroom, each courtroom should have one location that is designated as the bailiff's workstation. It should be furnished with a small desk and a movable swivel chair. It should be furnished with a silent ring telephone and a duress alarm. In addition, the station should also be equipped with two data lines, two phone lines, and a quadriplex electrical outlet for the future installation of a personal computer. The total area of the bailiff's station need not be more than 12 to 25 square feet. Its location may be close to the prisoner entrance or near the jury box. Not all courts use a bailiff. However, it is recommended that the space be provided to allow for future use of bailiffs.

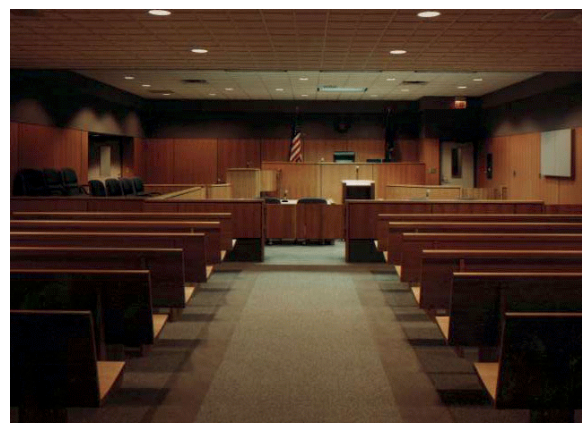
The bailiff or court officer should be able to see all the participants and the public. The location of the bailiff's station will vary depending upon the layout of the courtroom. The station may be located by the jury box entrance or it may be located near the prisoner entrance. The area surrounding the bailiff's station should be free of obstacles if ever necessary to respond to an emergency.

Within the secure, private judicial corridor, a bailiff's workstation of 40 to 50 square feet in an alcove or "pooled" setting with other bailiff's should be provided.

### 3.1.10 Spectator Seating

As a general rule, trials must be open and public. Persons who wish to view trials and hearings, whether members of the press or ordinary citizens, have a right to both see and hear the proceedings. Seating for spectators in high profile trials usually overwhelms even the largest courtrooms, and large multi-judge courts may want to plan one or two courtrooms to accommodate additional public seating.

Public seating should remain at floor level to permit access by disabled persons, which also adds prominence to the litigation area and judge's bench. The difference in elevation from the bench to the spectator-seating area promotes the judge's visual control of the courtroom.



42<sup>nd</sup> District Court, Macomb County, Michigan / Thomas Strat & Associates

The size of the spectator-seating area in most courtrooms is often determined by the number of prospective jurors that need to be accommodated in the courtroom during voir dire, which typically is between 24 and 60, depending upon the type of case. Seating requirements should satisfy this number of jurors in addition to witnesses and spectators, allowing approximately 10-15 square feet per person including circulation. In



## SECTION 3

### COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

large courtrooms, a standard of 10 square feet per person should be used. In smaller courtrooms, the 15 square feet figure should be used.

Rows that can hold eight or more people require an exit aisle on either side. Three feet is required between the first row and the railing of the well area to provide sufficient physical and sound separation between spectators and trial participants. This passageway may also serve as an exit to the central aisle, and care should be given to meeting local code restrictions.

The lighting in the spectator area should be subdued but bright enough for the judge and bailiff to clearly see everyone. The floor should be carpeted, and the surrounding walls should be acoustically treated.



Denton County Courts Building, Texas / Phillips Swager Associates

Public seating within the courtroom should include accessible wheelchair spaces. The number and location of wheelchair spaces should comply with the appropriate applicable requirements for assembly areas. In addition, where the seating capacity exceeds 50 and is located on one level that is not tiered or sloped, wheelchair spaces shall be provided in more than one seating row.

A permanently installed assistive listening system is required in fifty percent (50%) of all courtrooms, but not less than one of each type of courtroom in a building; a portable assistive listening system may be used in those courtrooms which do not contain a permanent system. Receivers for this system should be provided for a minimum of four percent (4%) of the room occupant load but not less than two receivers. The system should accommodate the public, as well as attorneys, jurors, judges, witnesses, court clerks, and court reporters. Two track systems are now available that allow for interpreters to transmit translations of court proceedings with the same system. Consideration should be given to accommodate other assistive systems and equipment including real-time transcription.

Public entry into the courtroom should be through a vestibule of approximately 70 to 90 square feet for noise control and security. The inner set of doors should have glass panels to permit visual identification of courtroom activities and participants without entering the courtroom.

For reasons of security, a single monitored public entrance is preferred. In traditional courtrooms, this entrance should be along the rear wall of the courtroom on the same axis as the judge's bench. In corner-orientation courtrooms, the entrance should be off-angle from the judge's bench and not along the same side of the courtroom.

The seating area for spectators should be accessible from the public circulation corridors and allow for ease of scanning or searching by security officers.

Seating may be either bench type or theater type. Movable or stacking chairs should be avoided.



### **3.1.11 Witness Waiting Rooms**

One of the most traumatic aspects of a trial for victims and witnesses is the numerous and prolonged appearances necessary in many cases. These proceedings normally require that all parties appear at the courthouse at the same time and congregate in the same public areas. This often results in victims having to physically associate with their alleged assailants and the defendant's family. The intermingling of defendants and witnesses for prosecution always has the potential for intimidation and conflict. The opportunity for a mistrial due to improper communication is also increased. [See Appendix Section A-2 for *Michigan Statutes - MCL 780.757; MSA 28.1287 (757)*]

There should be at least one, preferably two, victim/witness waiting room per courtroom. Each room should provide 15 to 20 square feet per person, with a minimal size of 100 square feet. Rooms should have easy access to restrooms and a drinking fountain.

Victim/witness waiting rooms should provide sight and sound separation from public waiting areas and should be accessible to the courtroom through the courtroom vestibule or else located in a nonpublic zone, such as the judicial staff corridor.

Individual victim/witness waiting rooms should be a minimum of 100 square feet to hold up to four persons. For groups over four persons or for long-term waiting, the room may include a toilet if one is not readily available elsewhere.

The rooms should be well ventilated and well lighted. All rooms should be accessible to persons with disabilities and feature a 36-inch doorway that will accept a wheelchair. Victim/witness-waiting rooms may require some access control to keep its occupants safe and free from intimidation. The rooms should be comfortably and attractively furnished.

The rooms should be soundproof. Victim/witness-waiting areas and attorney/client conference rooms may be designed to be interchangeable. A dedicated telephone in each room is not necessary, but access to a telephone should be convenient. Electrical and data and phone outlets may be provided so that prosecuting attorney staff may work (phone and computer) in the rooms while escorting or waiting with victims and witnesses prior to testimony.

### **3.1.12 Attorney/Client Conference Rooms**

Attorney/client conference rooms provide a private space for attorneys to confer with their clients or a small meeting area to be used by anyone having business in the court. Each courtroom should have two attorney/client conference rooms.

These rooms are often interchangeable in nature with the victim/witness rooms. The number of rooms needed will depend upon the type of proceedings and their location. Domestic and juvenile law cases often require additional rooms. At least two rooms, and up to four rooms, per courtroom may be provided.

Often, attorney/client conferences involve multiple litigants, witnesses, or family members, and the attorney/client conference room should be a minimum of 100 square feet.

Rooms should be soundproofed to maintain the privacy of conversations, particularly if located adjacent to a courtroom or the public corridor.

All rooms should be wheelchair accessible.





Attorney/client conference rooms should be located near the courtroom, either adjacent to a courtroom vestibule, or off the public corridor. If the room adjoins the courtroom, additional soundproofing may be necessary. Attorney/client rooms should not open directly into the courtroom because of disruptions this may create.

A viewing panel in the door or some means of identifying when the room is occupied should be provided.

The room should comfortably accommodate a table with four to six chairs.

Attorney/client conference rooms and victim/witness-waiting areas may be designed to be interchangeable. A dedicated telephone in each room is not necessary, but access to a telephone should be convenient. Electrical and data and phone outlets may be provided so that court staff may work (phone and computer) in the rooms at other times.

### 3.1.13 Entry Vestibule

A courtroom entrance or vestibule serves as a transition between the courtroom and the public circulation areas. It also blocks noise from the adjacent corridor. Typically, the vestibule consists of two sets of doors. Glass panels should be placed in both sets of doors to allow viewing of the interior without disturbing the proceedings. The distance between the doors should be regulated by applicable codes, but generally eight-to-ten feet are recommended. The vestibule should permit easy passage of a wheelchair. Approximately 70 to 90 square feet would be required for the entry vestibule. The vestibule entry might also include space for a coat closet and umbrella stand. Attorney/client conference rooms may also open off the vestibule. The public entrance to the courtroom should be lockable to provide security when the court is not in session.

### 3.1.14 Jury Deliberation Rooms



Jury Room, DuPage Co. Justice & Office Facility / HOK  
Scott Miller & Jon Miller Photographers

Jury deliberation time may last from only a few minutes to many days. Jurors may also spend considerable time in the deliberation room during trial recesses or periods when they have been excluded from the proceedings. Therefore, the room must be comfortable, well ventilated, and designed to minimize the stress on jurors. The jury deliberation room must protect the privacy of the jurors and their deliberations and assure confidentiality.

While each jury trial courtroom generally requires a jury deliberation room, it may be possible for courtrooms to share a jury deliberation room, depending on the number of jury trials. Smaller courts with infrequent needs for jury deliberation may wish to enlarge the room so that it may also serve as a jury assembly room or a conference room or perform some other function when not in use by a jury.

The room should assure the confidentiality of the jury's deliberations through soundproofing, controlled circulation, and supervision by a court security officer. The circuit court jury deliberation room should comfortably accommodate 12 jurors and 2 alternates and should be located in a secured zone of the building. The room should be at least 280 square feet, with a minimum width of 14 feet. This will allow sufficient space for a



blackboard, charts, exhibits, and video monitors. Additional space should be provided for a vestibule and two toilets. Total area for a circuit court jury deliberation room should approximate 420 to 490 square feet. Figure 3-5 illustrates a conceptual layout for a jury deliberation room.

The district/probate court jury deliberation room should accommodate 6 jurors and 2 alternates, and be located in a secured area of the building. The room should be at least 160 square feet, with a minimum width of 12 feet. Additional space should be provided for a vestibule and at least one toilet. Total minimum area for a district/probate court jury deliberation room should be approximately 240 to 280 square feet.

Although a district court jury deliberation room (maximum 8 jurors) could be smaller than the circuit court (420 sq ft vs. 240 sq ft), for future flexibility, planning all deliberation rooms to seat 14 jurors should be carefully considered.

An entrance or vestibule is desirable to block sound and to maintain confidentiality of deliberations. Also, deliberation rooms should be equipped with both men's and women's toilets. In smaller jury rooms, consideration may be given to using a unisex toilet.

The room should be soundproofed to prevent people in adjacent areas from hearing the deliberations. The room should be well lighted, well ventilated, and air-conditioned.

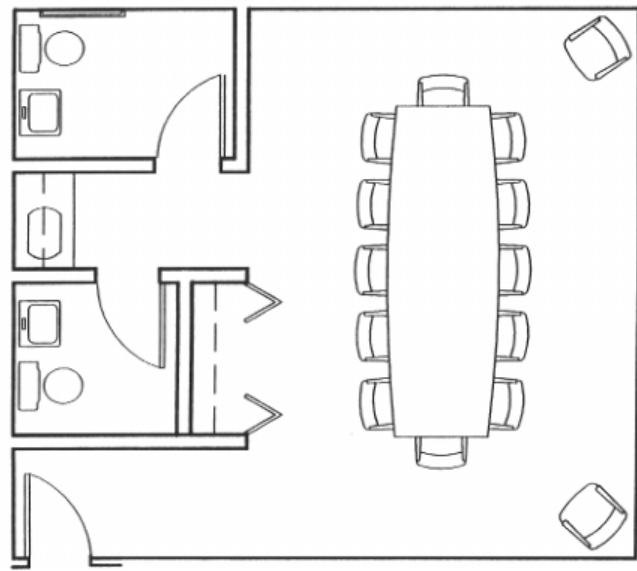
To minimize contacts with outside persons, the jury room should be designed to eliminate the need for persons to leave the room. Men and women's toilet facilities should be located off the entrance vestibule. These should be soundproofed so that they may be used without embarrassment, and the doors should not open directly into the main jury room.

All jury deliberation rooms should be fully accessible to persons with disabilities and accommodate wheelchairs. Access to and from the courtroom should be barrier free. Refreshment areas, kitchenette, coat storage, and toilets must also be fully accessible.

The jury deliberation room should be near the courtroom. The room may adjoin the courtroom or be located across a private corridor. To provide confidentiality for the jurors' deliberations, the room should not adjoin the attorney conference or witness-waiting rooms. A bailiff or other staff member may supervise the jury from a security station outside the jury deliberation room. There should also be a signaling or contact system for jurors to notify the bailiff of any special needs.

The jury deliberation room should be accessible from the courtroom by a private corridor, and jurors should not have to pass through the public-seating area of the courtroom to enter the jury deliberation room. The public must not be able to gain access to the jurors or see or hear the deliberations.

Figure 3-5  
Jury Deliberation Room Layout







Long and sometimes emotional deliberations can increase feelings of claustrophobia and general unease, thereby interfering with the decision-making process. Windows may be provided for visual and psychological

relief but should not allow the jurors to see or hear the public, as this may be grounds for a mistrial. If the jury deliberation room is located on the ground floor, it should not have windows, unless they are high enough to prevent a person outside from seeing or hearing the deliberations. The room should not have vented doors or transoms.

A drinking fountain or sink and coffee machine should be located within the room. Comfortable chairs should be arranged around a conference table. The chairs should be upholstered, movable, with back support and arm rests.

Although telephones are not allowed in jury deliberation rooms, a telephone jack, data jack, and electrical outlets should be installed for when the room is not in use by jurors. Cable connections for video monitors would allow jurors to view taped evidence and review transcripts. There needs to be a device to summon the bailiff when the deliberations have been concluded.

### 3.1.15 Judges' Chambers



US Courthouse, Maryland / HOK

The judicial chamber area contains the judge's private office, judicial support staff and their support spaces which typically includes a reception area, private toilet, and space for files, supplies, and office equipment such as a printer, fax machine, and photocopier. Depending upon the judge's office, a separate judicial conference room may be required if not provided for within the private office.

The judges' chambers must accommodate meetings and conferences with staff and attorneys, legal research and study, preparation and review of case files, and preparation of opinions. Generally, space requirements for the judge's chambers range from 280 to 500 square feet, depending on the location of judicial conferencing areas, the size of the judge's personal library (if any), and space standards agreed to by the court.

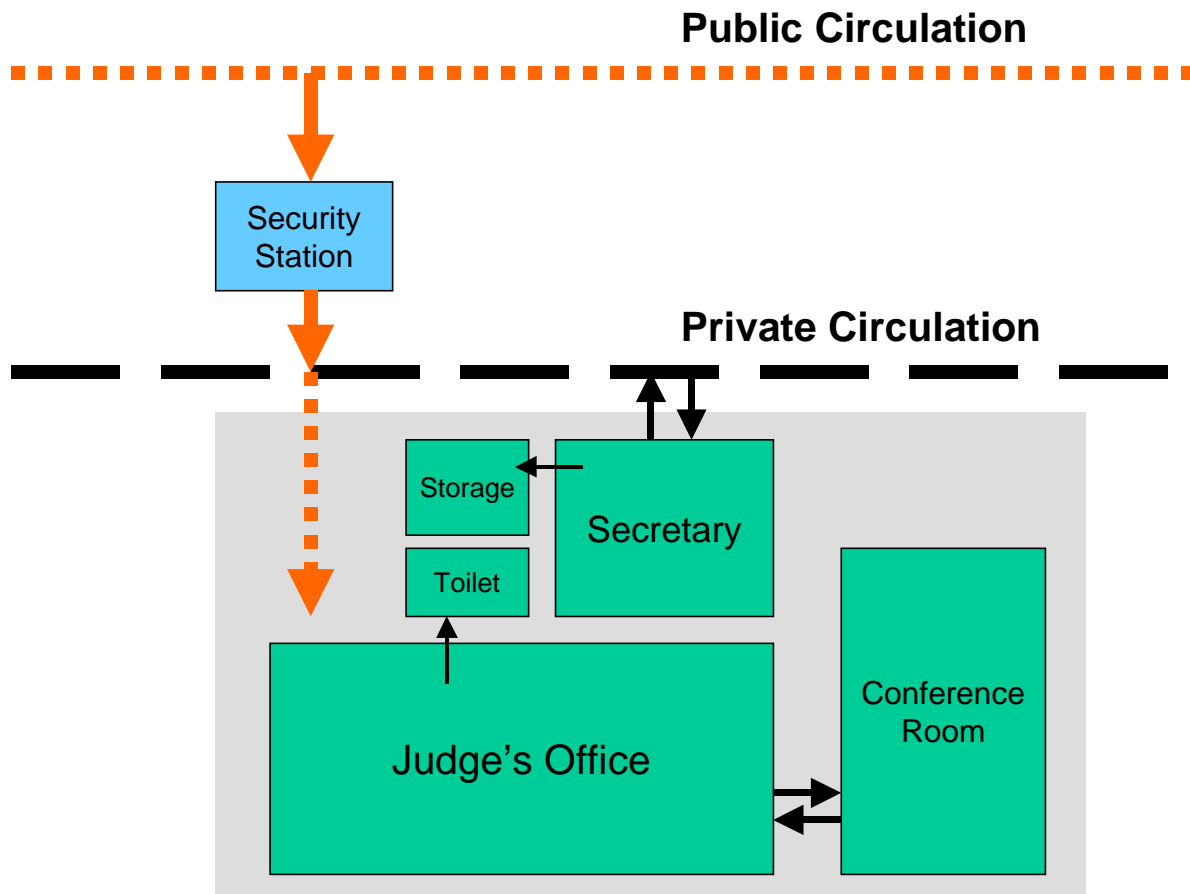
The chambers should be located along a private circulation corridor, as shown in Figure 3-6, on the following page.



3.1.15.1 *Security*

A silent, supervised duress alarm should be installed in a concealed location under the judges' desks for use in notifying central security of an emergency. An alarm may also be located at the secretary's desk.

Figure 3-6  
Judge's Chamber Access Diagram



3.1.15.2 *Environment*

Much of the judge's work requires a quiet and distraction-free environment.

- The office should be soundproof and relatively quiet to prevent conversations with attorneys and litigants from being overheard.
- The chambers should have windows for natural lighting and visual relief.
- Curtains or blinds should be installed to prevent an unobstructed view of the office from the outside. Alternatively, windows could have a reflective film coating to increase privacy and security.



### 3.1.15.3 *Furnishings and Finishes*

The judge's private office should be furnished with an executive desk, credenza, bookcases, small conference table, and several side chairs. The Furnishings and finishes should be appropriate to the decorum of the office. The secretary requires a desk, credenza, file storage equipment, and a worktable.

Figure 3-7 shows two potential configurations for judges' chambers.

### 3.1.15.4 *Circulation and Adjacency*

The judge should be able to reach his or her office by means of a private corridor the directly connects the office to both private parking and the courtroom. The chambers are typically located next to the courtrooms, separated from the courtroom by no more than a private corridor. Another typical arrangement is for the chambers to be located immediately adjacent to the courtroom.

Persons visiting the chambers should be able to do so by passing through a secure or monitored entrance.

### 3.1.15.5 *Technological Applications*

Offices should have electrical receptacles and cable conduits for PCs to access legal databases, word processing, and case management systems through a Local Area Network.

The office should be equipped with personal computers, fax machine, printers, and scanner.

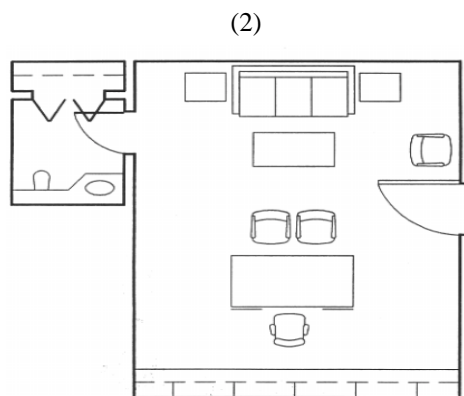
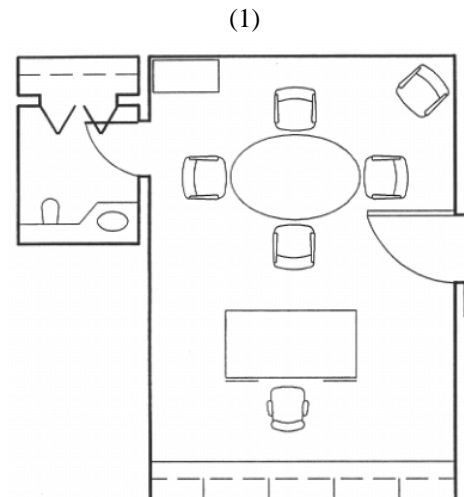
Each workstation should be equipped with at least two quadriplex electrical outlets, two data lines, and two phone lines. The judge's office may require a TV with VCR or DVD player.

### 3.1.15.6 *Support Spaces*

If the chambers are separated from the courtrooms, a small robing room of approximately 50 square feet should be located adjacent to the courtroom for the judge to use. A small office near the courtroom (if chambers are separated) should be provided for business during recesses, for small conferences, and for sequestering witnesses, and for attorneys to use for settlement conferences. This room should be equipped with a desk, several chairs, and a complete workstation, including personal computer, phone lines, and data lines.

Other spaces include a small conference room in the chamber area, file storage space, supply storage areas, and reception and waiting areas.

Figure 3-7  
Judge's Chamber Configurations





The judges secretary needs a work area of 100 to 120 square feet and an adjacent reception/waiting area of 40-60 square feet (or 20 sq. ft. / visitor) for visitors waiting to see the judge. A law clerk needs a 120 square feet office in the judge's chambers with access to the law library, either electronic or traditional. Other judicial staff, if any, include scheduling clerk and bailiffs who need a small work area in the judge's chambers or centrally located.

## **3.2 COURT ADMINISTRATION**

Court administration provides administrative and program support to the courts in each circuit. The court administrator assists the court with its day-to-day operations management and programs, including budget preparation, facilities and equipment management, data processing, supplies and equipment purchases, statistical reporting, calendar management, personnel administration, grant management, and special programs. Court services programs involve the development and management of special programs to assist the court process cases promptly and effectively. Examples of these programs include victim/witness management, drug courts or family violence courts, drug testing or treatment programs, special pilot programs, dispute resolution (ADR) programs, and even law library management.

The design and image of court administration offices should be similar to that of a general professional office setting. The layout should be organized by function and established to promote efficiency and comfort.

Typical spaces include a reception area, secretarial and support staff work areas, private office for the court administrator, administrative workstations, office support areas, such as photocopy and workroom, supply and equipment storage, file storage, and a conference room.

Depending upon the size of the office, not all components may be located in the same area. Court reporters may be located in one area, ADR staff in another, and administrative staff in a third. The design will be contingent upon these distributions. The administrator's private office should be generally consistent in size with that of the clerk's private office or that of a county department head, approximately 250 to 325 square feet.

Court administration deals most frequently with the judges and the clerk of court. The office should have easy and direct access to both of these offices. However, the administrator's role is more private and far less public-oriented than that of the clerk. It is generally recommended that the office be located higher in the facility, away from the main entrance with convenient access to the judges and judicial staff through private circulation.

The office should have both public and private entrances. The general public and attorneys should enter from the public circulation zones. Judges and judicial staff should enter from the private or restricted zones. Court administration staff should have access to "staff only" areas through the use of a controlled access system. Where the court administration and clerk's duties are shared, their offices should be conveniently located to each other.

All areas of the office should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

Lighting, acoustics, and interior finishes should be appropriate to that of a professional setting. Natural lighting is desirable in all work areas.

The office should maintain standard courthouse security measures. The private corridor used by court administration staff and judicial personnel should have controlled access, either through card or key entry.



Offices need electrical receptacles and cabling for both voice and data at each workstation. Other equipment will include personal computers, facsimile machines, printers, photocopiers, document scanners, imaging workstations, and file servers. Each workstation requires at least two quad power outlets, two data jacks and two phone jacks.

### **3.3 CLERK OF COURT**

*Note: In the following section, the term "clerk's offices is used to signify the clerical offices of any court, whether circuit, probate, or district. Statements apply to all of these offices, unless indicated otherwise by the use of a specific office type.*

The court clerk is the office that handles all of the business and record keeping activities of the court. Duties cover the entire range of court-related activities including receipt of fees and fines, as well as creation, updating, distribution, and maintenance of case files and court records.

Requests for jurors sent to the county jury commission are coordinated by the clerk's office. Jurors are checked in at the clerk's office upon arrival and are monitored while on jury duty. In addition, this office is responsible for the fiscal operations of the court, managing the court's accounts and budget, and receiving payments of fines and fees imposed by the court. The clerk's office is responsible for the proper identification and safe storage of evidence, and also takes responsibility for its own management, under the judges' supervision.

In some court facilities, additional court or non-court functions may be located within the clerk's office, causing inconvenience, public confusion, or security problems. For example, each county clerk is officially the clerk of the corresponding circuit court. In all but the largest court facilities, where a separate circuit court division of the county clerk's office may be established, court records and administration are managed by the same office that maintains county records; staff duties may or may not be combined. In such cases, non-court staff may have access to court files, and the circuit court clerk's office (the county clerk's office) may be located away from court areas and near county offices.

#### **3.3.1 Circulation and Adjacency**

Because the clerk's office is the center of much of the court's activity, the location is critical. Since most of the public's interaction with the court begins at the court clerk's office, the office ought to be highly visible and located near the public entrance to the court areas. At the same time, the location of the clerk's office must allow for efficient staff movement between the office and other court areas, such as courtroom and chambers.

#### **3.3.2 Handicapped Access**

All areas of the office should be accessible to persons with disabilities. Particular attention should be given to designing at least one public counter position to accommodate a staff person or customer with a disability. Chairs or benches should be provided in the public waiting area for the elderly or mobility-impaired individuals.



### **3.3.3 Administrative Offices**

Administrative offices may be required. These offices, housing the chief clerk or other administrators, should be located within the clerk's office area but should be removed from the general activity area. Windows facing

into the general office area allow administrators to supervise general office activity, yet sacrifice the speech privacy a private office provides. Space for conference rooms and secretarial areas may be required as part of the administrative offices. These spaces may be private offices or partitioned workstations. A minimum size of 100-120 square feet is suggested.

### **3.3.4 Organization and Layout**

The office layout and workstation arrangement should be flexible and conducive to efficient case processing. In larger clerk's offices, similar elements should be placed adjacent to one another. Depending upon the size of the court, the clerk's office may be a single office or a complex of several rooms. In all but the largest courts, one large room can serve as the main office area in which the public is served. Vaults, record storage areas, workrooms, magistrate's offices, equipment rooms, and offices for chief clerks or court administrators may also be provided.

On the following pages, Figures 3-8 through 3-15 demonstrate various approaches to clerical workstation layouts using either *systems* or *modular* furniture. The basic difference is that on system furniture layouts the panels and the furniture are attached. In modular furniture, the panels can be independent of the furniture. Depending on the function of staff, the workstations range in size from 48 to 100 square feet. The Clerk of Court's office should be similar to the Court Administrator's or a County Department head, approximately 250 to 325 square feet.

The exact organization and preferred spatial arrangement of the clerk's office varies among jurisdictions. However, some general activity areas can be described which are common to most courts. The information desk, public desk or counter, case processing, data processing, staff lounge, and vault areas, as well as administrative offices, are discussed below.

In small offices there may be little specialization in duties of the clerks. One clerk may handle civil and criminal cases. In larger offices, there may be separate divisions for civil and criminal cases and activities related to each are performed in distinct areas. For example there may be separate civil and criminal public counters. As offices grow in size, there is a natural specialization in functions.

The decision to construct private offices or partial height partitions workstations will be influenced by several factors:

- The need for privacy
- The type of heating and cooling system
- The desire for shared exterior light (windows)
- Budget

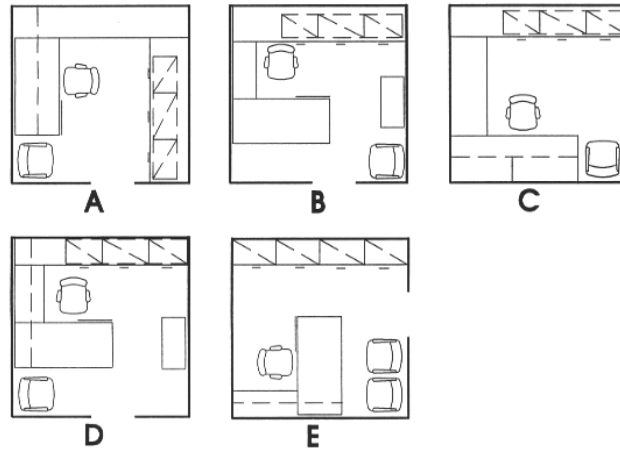
Open workstations offer the greatest flexibility and can work effectively with system or modular furniture. The final decision should allow for maximum flexibility, with a consistency in space allocation for the function served.





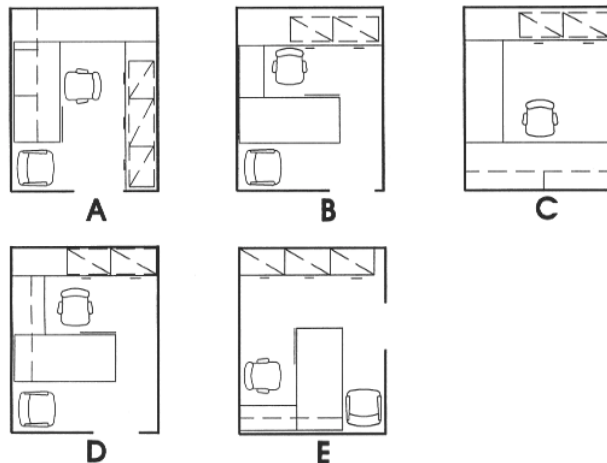
**NOTE:** The following examples could be enclosed by partial partitions, modular panels, or open stations.

**Figure 3-8**  
**Clerical Workstations Configurations (1)**



<b>WS-1 (Systems Furniture)</b>					
<b>Workstation</b>	<b>100 SF</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Worksurface (SF)	56	37	47	39	19
Files (LF)	15	15	15	15	20
Shelving (LF)	8	10	10	8	6
Storage (LF)				3	

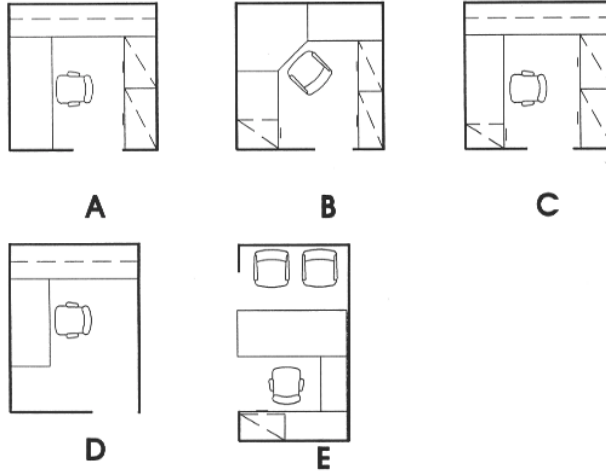
**Figure 3-9**  
**Clerical Workstations Configurations (2)**



<b>WS-2 (Systems Furniture)</b>					
<b>Workstation</b>	<b>80 SF</b>				
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Worksurface (SF)	52	33	47	30	16
Files (LF)	15	10	10	10	15
Shelving (LF)	8	6	6	6	6

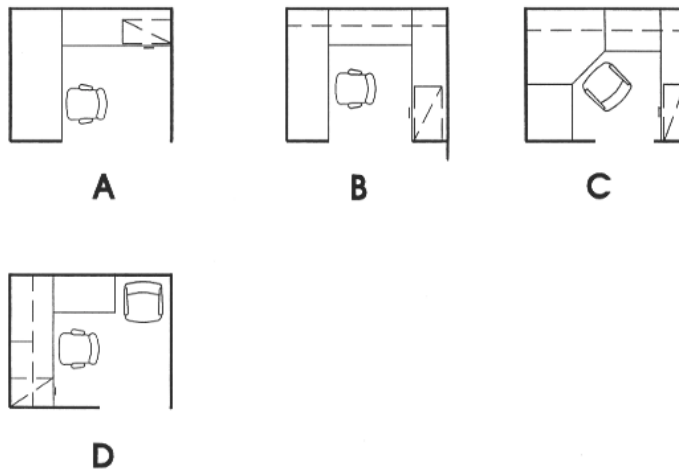


**Figure 3-10**  
**Clerical Workstations Configurations (3)**



WS-3 (Systems Furniture)					
Workstation	64 SF				
	A	B	C	D	E
Worksurface (SF)	31	29	43	27	33
Files (LF)	12	12	12	--	6
Shelving (LF)	8	8	8	7	6

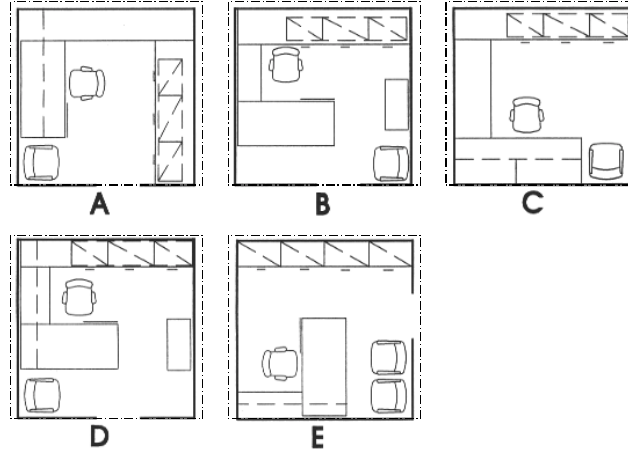
**Figure 3-11**  
**Clerical Workstations Configurations (4)**



WS-4 (Systems Furniture)				
Workstation	48 SF			
	A	B	C	D
Worksurface (SF)	30	34	34	18
Files (LF)	6	6	6	6
Shelving (LF)	8	8	8	6



**Figure 3-12**  
**Modular - Clerical Workstations Configurations (5)**



WS-1 (Modular Furniture)					
Workstation	100 SF				
	A	B	C	D	E
Worksurface (SF)	56	37	47	39	19
Files (LF)	15	15	15	15	20
Shelving (LF)	8	10	10	8	6
Storage (LF)				3	

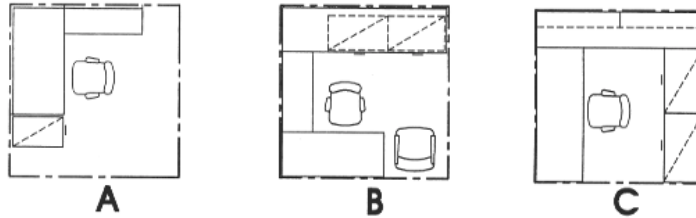
**Figure 3-13**  
**Modular - Clerical Workstations Configurations (6)**



WS-2 (Modular Furniture)					
Workstation	80 SF				
	A	B	C	D	E
Worksurface (SF)	18	55	18	18	17
Files (LF)	10	3	15	10	15
Shelving (LF)	6	5	5	6	6

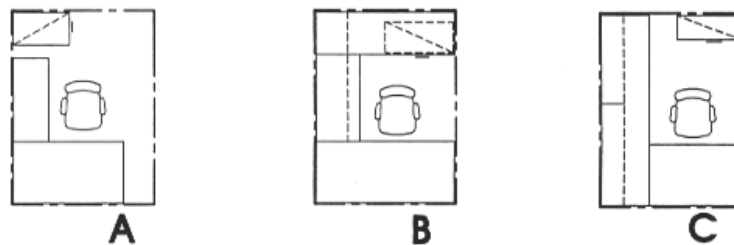


**Figure 3-14**  
**Modular - Clerical Workstations Configurations (7)**



<b>WS-3 (Modular Furniture)</b>			
<b>Workstation</b>	<b>64 SF</b>		
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Worksurface (SF)	17	25	33
Files (LF)	4	6	12
Shelving (LF)	-	8	8

**Figure 3-15**  
**Modular - Clerical Workstations Configurations (8)**



<b>WS-4 (Modular Furniture)</b>			
<b>Workstation</b>	<b>48 SF</b>		
	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Worksurface (SF)	23	33	33
Files (LF)	4	6	6
Shelving (LF)	-	8	8

Another way of organizing clerk functions is not along jurisdictional lines such as civil and criminal but along functional lines. Clerks may specialize in serving the public at the counter, while other groups may process case files, and others may do the filing.

The use of technology and automation is also having an affect on the organization of clerks' offices. With manual case processing systems, case indexing, preparation of notices and service of process, and preparation of the docket (summary of actions) are generally separate activities performed by different clerks. With automation, these activities are usually automated and are performed automatically. Data entry or initiation of the case in the automated system occurs at the point of transaction at the public counter so that the activities of the counter clerks is becoming more complicated and important. Counter clerks used to accept pleadings, time and date stamp the pleadings, and then place them in a basket for further processing by someone else. Now counter clerks may also do all of the data entry at the counter. This is



also changing the nature and design of public counters. Now and in the future, they will need to be outfitted as complete clerk workstations with electrical supply, computer terminals with video display monitors, cash drawers, printers, and even optical scanners in the future as more and more activities are shifted from the back office areas to the public counter area. Separate areas, such as a cashier's room and mail opening area, should be available in a secure portion of the clerk's work area.

### 3.3.5 Security

All areas of the clerk's office should be designed to provide for the safety of the public and court employees as well as security for the documents and materials stored there. Much of the information processed by the clerk's office is part of the permanent court record. Access to documents must be carefully controlled. Court records, case files, and trial evidence stored by the clerk's office must be protected against tampering, theft, fire, and water damage. In offices performing both court and non-court functions, access to court material must be restricted to authorized court personnel. In such offices, separate storage areas should be provided for court-related material. The public and court staff should not have uncontrolled access to case files and record storage areas; windows, doors, and grilles should be used so that all record storage areas can be secured at night. Fireproof vaults help protect items placed in long-term storage. The use of separate fireproof storage vaults for storing active case files, however, is decreasing. It is more efficient to locate case files in or adjacent to the case processing areas of the office. All areas of the clerk's office, including record storage areas, should have a sprinkler system.

### 3.3.6 Information Desk

Larger courts may find it useful to provide an information desk outside the clerk's office. This is especially helpful if there are many courtrooms or several office areas in the building. At the information desk, people can be directed to the appropriate office or courtroom and can receive court calendar information. Alternatively, an information kiosk could be located in the lobby.



Example of Information Kiosk

### 3.3.7 Public Counter

The area referred to as the public desk or counter is the service area where the public comes to obtain information about court proceedings, file case pleadings, pay fines and fees, and access case files. Jurors may be registered here or directed by signage to another area for this process. Because of its use as an information and administrative area, the public area should be the most visible and recognizable part of the clerk's office. Clear signage is helpful in enabling the public to easily find the area. Placing the public desk on the major corridor leading from the main building entrance to the courtrooms helps employees of the clerk's office to informally monitor the activities of people using the courthouse. This location also encourages those involved in court cases to check in and serves to remind those who owe fines or fees to settle their debts before leaving the courthouse.



King County, Washington / HOK / John Sutton Photographer





In most clerks' offices, interaction with the public occurs at a service counter, which separates public areas from the clerical work areas. This service counter may be located within the office itself or may be built into a wall of the office, opening onto public circulation areas. This counter may be separated from the public area with security glass. The degree of security required depends on the size of the openings and the location of the glazing and would be determined during the design phase with the architect. In some very small offices, the public may have direct access to staff members' desks. Even in these offices, a public counter is recommended.

Each clerk with a counter function should be provided a space of 24 to 32 square feet for 30 to 52 linear inches of counter top and the side work surface or files. A counter position of 28 square feet allows for counter station of 52 linear inches, a side "leaf" of 24" x 60", a file cabinet, and stool. If cash is involved in the transaction, a counter-top to ceiling secure glazed opening should be considered.

A separate workstation of 48 to 80 square feet for counter clerks should also be provided since much of the counter transactions require further work at a separate location. If at all possible, the "back counter" stations should be in view of the public counter.

Often, the public must wait for information and fill out forms. For this reason, sufficient counter space must be provided. If clerical tasks involving public contact are separated into divisions (criminal and civil) as they are in district court, these divisions should be clearly identified with signage to prevent confusion and to allow smooth transaction of business. With automation of court records, the location of computer terminals at the public counter, or other easily accessible area, has become common. Proper planning includes the provision of additional space for such terminals with adequate electrical supply and data terminals.

In smaller courts, it is common for clerical staff to have multiple responsibilities. Serving the public at the counter may be just one of several duties performed. In this situation, desk space should be provided nearby to allow them to work at other tasks as time permits. In larger courts, counter staff may be permanently assigned to the counter and permanent workstations need to be incorporated into the counter design, including computer terminals, video display monitors, cash drawers (registers), printers, and scanners.



Orange County, Florida / HLM Architects

Greater security precautions must be taken at any location where cash transactions occur. A designated cashier's station should be provided, and in most large courts the station should be enclosed in glass for security reasons. A secure cash storage system should be provided. A duress alarm should be located at the counter and consideration should be given to installation of a video security camera.

Public access to court records and case files is handled by the public counter. Provision of a controlled area in which the public (primarily attorneys) may read these documents will help protect their integrity. This might be as simple as a desk and chair located within sight of court clerk staff. Access to this area should be controlled by the office staff to allow the staff to freely check records in and out when necessary. A coin-operated photocopy machine may be provided within this area for public use.

Space for public waiting at 12 to 15 square feet per visitor should be provided adjacent to the service counter. This area should not interfere with activity in the public corridor and should be sufficient to accommodate those who are waiting, without blocking circulation. Tables or stand-up counters for filling out forms should be provided to reduce congestion at the public service counter. Up-to-date court calendars should be posted so that people can find the time and location of their trial without bothering the clerks. This area should also be the location of public access computer terminals.



### 3.3.8 Case Processing

The main work area of the clerk's office is the case processing area. Here all the current records of the court are kept and updated. This area, in particular, ought to be designed according to basic space planning criteria for offices (see Figures 3-8 through 3-15). The organization of the work and the exact nature of the duties performed vary. The allocation of space and the organization of desks should be based on the needs of each particular court and the functions to be performed.

Satisfactory accommodation of the great volume of case file materials, which must be maintained, is often a problem. The current file storage area must be as accessible to both the employees serving the public desk and to other clerical staff members who compile and update the files. The file space provided must accommodate anticipated growth in addition to the existing needs. A system which provides storage of active files within the clerk's office and storage of closed files in an adjacent vault is the most efficient.



Typical open "landscape" office workstations. Provided by HOK.

Because clerks must frequently make official copies of records for public use, it is essential that photocopying machines are available in the office. If microfilm records are used, space for photographic reading and perhaps microfilm developing will be needed as well. Space for supply storage should be provided.

### 3.3.9 Data Processing

The greatest change that has come to clerks' offices in the past twenty years has been the introduction of the computer and the implementation of automated case management and financial management applications. Most offices are, or will be, connected to larger court or countywide computer networks. More ambitious courts may become part of a large integrated criminal justice system tying together the courts, police, prosecutors, and other criminal justice agencies into one large network and permitting the electronic transfer of critical case information from one organization to another. Michigan is currently attempting to integrate various state departments for information exchanged.

At the beginning of automation efforts, data entry was typically done by a separate data entry staff at a separate location using paper forms. As computer systems have become more powerful and smaller, these activities are now more likely to be performed at the point of transaction at the clerks' workstations and public counter. It is essential that every workstation be fully capable of being equipped with a personal computer, video display terminal, keyboard, small printer, modem and telephone, and even an optical scanner. This requires at least two quadriplex electrical outlets, two data jacks, and two voice jacks at each location.

Each office will also require a room to locate a file server and where network connections can be made. This room may require a raised access floor and special environmental controls. Generally speaking a minimum area of 80 square feet per station is acceptable.



### 3.3.10 Records Management

The key components of a records management program include:

- **Central Coordination and Administration** – For a records management activity to function properly, it must be planned, coordinated, organized, and controlled by local staff. Designation of a records manager is the initial management tool necessary to establish an integrated system of records control. The records manager is responsible for determining what records exist, their retention values, and their ultimate disposition.
- **Document Schedule** – Each type of record, such as correspondence, notes, and personnel records, has a different value and use. A list of record types is called a schedule. A schedule is intended to stipulate the length of time a document must be retained as well as facilitate easy reference. This process is, in most cases, mandated by State law and should be looked upon as a routine procedure. (See the State Court Administrative Office's Michigan Trial Court Case File Management Standards. Attention should be given to the State of Michigan General Schedule No. 16 – Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Michigan Trial Courts).
- **Microfilming or Electronic Storage** – Microfilming and more recently digitizing records are efficient ways to provide access to inactive or seldom used files. (In the case of digitizing, active files could be included as well). Both methods are excellent storage options for some records, while other records are totally inappropriate. An analysis of every record type needs to be conducted, using the following questions as guidelines:
  - Is the system currently approved by the State as an appropriate means of storage?
  - How long must the record be retained?
  - How frequently are current and historical records accessed?
  - Are there confidentiality or security issues?
  - Is direct public access appropriate or is staff assistance required?
  - What volume of records is generated?
  - What capital investment is needed for readers/printers or digitizing equipment?
  - How important is a back-up copy in case the originals are destroyed?
  - How expensive is storage space?

Prior to initiating microfilming or electronic storage, the Court should assess the total cost. Records must be checked for completeness and prepared for filming or digitizing, which requires trained staff. After the record is filmed or digitized, each department using these methods will need adequate readers/printers or digitizing equipment.



- **Authorized Destruction** – In the interest of sound business practice, documents that have reached the end of their useful lives should be destroyed. The length of useful life is determined by the State and is included in the retention schedule. Some records may be transferred to a State-maintained storage facility.
- **Record Security** – Beyond record storage space, record retention is the issue of record security in case of catastrophic situations, such as theft, fire, natural disasters, or deterioration due to poor environmental conditions, rodents, and/or insect infestation. Producing a copy of the microfilmed records is very economical, and, therefore, provides a remote, secure storage area for the original while the copy is used in the originating department. The difficult decisions are those regarding records that may have an early destruction date or those that are maintained in original status for years. In any thorough records retention evaluation program, each type of record should be given separate consideration. It would also be advisable to allocate a portion of a major record retention center to a vault-type retention area that is designed to withstand most catastrophes.
- **Current Records** – With few exceptions, most records still begin in paper form. The paper needs to be stored in some type of cabinet or shelving. Records vary in how frequently they are removed from their storage areas. A certain amount needs to be stored in the office for ready access. The key is identifying which records could be removed to less expensive storage space, thus relieving office congestion.

For those records kept in an office area, the type of storage vehicle should be evaluated. Standard vertical or lateral file cabinets are appropriate for low volume storage at individual workstations, but they are very inefficient for high volume storage. The most common types of efficient paper storage are fixed high-density shelving or mobile high-density shelving. When compared to standard file cabinets, fixed shelving provides twice as much storage per square foot and mobile shelving provides three times as much. However, the structural system of the building must be able to support the concentrated weight of the records and storage units.

### 3.3.11 Records Storage

The records of all court activities, including decisions and actions, must be accurately prepared and properly preserved. Every step in the processing of court cases results in a record keeping activity, from the creation of a record or file to the maintenance and updating of an existing file, and the disposition of a file. Courts must save both active and post-disposition or inactive files. Some clerks must also maintain other county files, such as marriage licenses, land deeds, and voting records.

While records retention and destruction programs have been designed to limit the records that must be stored, storage space requirements continue to increase. Even with document imaging technologies, courts will continue to have significant record storage requirements and must continue to follow mandated State of Michigan record retention requirements (See the State Court Administrative Office's [Michigan Trial Court Case File Management Standards](#). Attention should be given to the State of Michigan General Schedule No. 16 – Records Retention and Disposal Schedule for Michigan Trial Courts).

Several technologies exist that can impact both how court records are maintained as well as how the records are stored. Microfilm, or micrographics, is a familiar type of technology in many courts. There are updateable microfiche for storing active case files and roll microfilm for long-term storage of closed cases. While records are not always destroyed after being microfilmed, considerable space can be saved when records are removed or destroyed afterwards. Optical disk technology is another method of record





management and storage. Files are scanned into a computer system and are available to all persons needing access to the file through a computer network system. Access can be controlled, and limits can be established as to whom can make changes or updates to the records.

For the filing system, there are four main considerations for each type of record that must be maintained: 1) the type of record; 2) the filing arrangement; 3) the filing equipment; and 4) the filing supplies. Each type of record has different storage requirements because of the difference in the types and numbers of documents filed and different time requirements for retention. Traffic cases, for example, usually consist of the traffic citation and one or two other pieces of paper and are often stored in narrow drawers or shelves. On the other hand, criminal felony and civil files can be extremely bulky and require several inches of filing space, either in drawers or on shelves. More complex cases may take up several feet of filing space.



High Density File Storage

Court case files consist of active and inactive files. Most courts maintain active files close at hand in a variety of storage systems. Inactive records are usually storage in "banker" boxes either on or off-site. The filing equipment currently available includes: fixed lateral shelving, hanging open-box files, movable lateral shelving, vertical drawer filing, and mechanized filing. Other specialized equipment for filing includes: card files, top or open reference files, large document (map) files, computer product filing equipment (printouts, tapes, disks), and microfilm filing equipment. In addition, storage area must be available for filing system supplies such as file folders, file guides, file supports, and "out" folders.

The most efficient filing system is an open shelf lateral style that has 40 to 60 percent more useable space than standard vertical file cabinets. For inactive files, warehouse type shelving and one cubic foot storage boxes are generally recommended. In both instances, the minimum live load capacity of the floor structure is approximately 125 to 150 pounds per square foot, depending on the height of shelving and the type of equipment used. Vendors of filing systems can provide specific information on their products.

### 3.3.12 Vaults

Vaults are needed in cases where the clerk of court is responsible for storage of trial evidence. Every clerk's office should have a fire and vandal resistant vault for storage of closed files. Because even closed files are frequently needed by the clerk's office and vault entrances should be well supervised, the vault should be located adjacent to the clerk's office if possible. The entrance to the vault should be located within the staff area of the clerk's office so that it is relatively secure and can be left open during offices hours. To prevent fire from spreading into the vault and to protect the vault from vandalism, there should be no windows in it. If windows exist, they should be barred if located at grade or below. If shortage of space is a serious problem, storage vaults may be located in more remote areas of the courthouse or, for very old files, in another building. However, access to these locations is difficult to supervise, and therefore, vaults should be remotely located only as a last resort. A fire-rated safe should be located in the vault. If the weight of the safe is less than 350 pounds, the safe should be wall or floor mounted.





### **3.3.13 Staff Lounge**

A separate lounge and toilets should be provided for use by all court staff. Because a good proportion of court staff work in the clerk's office, this is often a good location in which to provide a staff lounge. The size of a lounge depends on the number of staff working in the court facility. Approximately 15 to 20 square feet per person should be provided for the number of people anticipated at one time. The lounge may include a small kitchenette, tables and chairs, vending machines, and a pay phone. With base and overhead cabinets including a sink, the minimum size for four people would be 120 square feet.

### **3.3.14 General Guidelines for Clerk's Office**

- Offices for the court clerk and probate register shall be located in areas easily identified and located by the public.
- The security of all physical items and court records under the control of the court clerk and the confidentiality of court information must be maintained.
- Separate the public area of the clerk's office from the clerical work area by a counter. This counter shall be large enough to accommodate several people simultaneously and may be located within the office or as part of a wall.
- If the various clerical operations involving public contact are separated into divisions (criminal or civil), identify those divisions by signage.
- Provide a public waiting area within or just outside the clerk's office. Also, provide seating, counters for filling out forms, public access computer terminals, and a posted court calendar in this area. According to the size of the court, between 12 and 15 square feet per person should be allowed for the maximum number of people anticipated at one time.
- At least one position of the public counter should be accessible to a person in a wheelchair.
- Provide a controlled area for public examination of court records within convenient view of clerical employees. A separate counter area of 3 to 5 square feet per station should be provided to complete forms.
- Provide a secure system for the receipt and storage of collected fines and fees. Design the office for efficient paper and information flow.
- Provide adequate and secure storage for active case files. Do not store records in areas accessible to the public.
- If evidence presented to the court is stored in the clerk's office, provide secure storage for the evidence.
- In new or remodeled facilities, include work space and cable runs to accommodate computer terminals at each workstation and the public counter.
- Control of the clerk's area and the confidentiality of court information must be maintained.



- Provide a secure, lockable room of at least 60 square feet for opening mail, since many payments are made through the mail. The room should have sufficient glazing for observation of the mail sorting and opening process.
- Provide a supply storage area within the clerk's office.
- Secure all areas of the clerk's office against unauthorized entry when the office is closed. Grilles, sliding doors, or other devices may be used as necessary.
- Provide a staff lounge with staff toilet(s) near the clerk's office.
- Provide a long-term storage vault for evidence storage. Vaults should not be shared with municipal, township or county offices nor with any other non-court function.
- Construct vaults with materials and assemblies which meet a two-hour or better fire rating.
- Locate vaults adjacent to the clerk's office, with direct access from that office.
- Insure that vault doors have an internal release for escape from inside.
- Design vaults without windows. Protect windows in existing vaults with grilles or alarms.
- Use fire extinguishing systems of the inert gas type in vaults.

### **3.4 FAMILY DIVISION (INCLUDING FRIEND OF THE COURT)**

The Friend of the Court (FOC) is the investigative, supervisory, and enforcement arm of the Circuit Court in all domestic relations matters, including divorce, family support orders, and paternity orders. The office primarily is responsible for collecting child support and enforcing orders for custody, visitation and support.

Another FOC responsibility is investigating domestic relations cases and making recommendations to the circuit court and the parties regarding the welfare of minor children.

The Friend of the Court is appointed by the chief circuit court judge. Staff typically consists of the Friend of Court, assistant Friends of Court, referees, dispute resolution specialists, enforcement officers, finance officers, payment clerks, investigators, and office support staff.

Required functional space includes private offices for the Friend of Court, the assistant Friend of Court, enforcement officers, finance officer, and possibly referees. Clerical and office support staff are best accommodated at open-office workstations. Additional areas include records storage space, a payment window/counter, adequate reception and waiting areas, equipment and supply storage, mail sorting area, hearing rooms, conference or interview rooms, staff lounge, work room, and space for office equipment.

The office requires easy public access and should be located on the building's main public corridor. Because of the high volume of traffic, it is best to locate the office on a lower floor and away from the courtrooms, chambers, and other judicial areas of the courthouse. There should be a secure separation between the public access area and the private work areas. Clients must escorted in and out of private areas if seen in caseworker offices.



If offices require after-hours access to the building, the office should have a separate and secure entrance to the building. Persons entering the office after-hours, however, should not have unrestricted access to other parts of the facility, such as the courtrooms, clerks' offices, or judicial chambers.

The FOC requires convenient access to circuit court records, judges' chambers, and courtrooms.

The office should have a reception and waiting area for visitors. Because of the need to separate parties, separate waiting spaces may be provided. The accommodations should be comfortable and pleasant. Visitors in the waiting area should not be able to look into the work areas of the FOC's office and excessive noise from office and clerical spaces should be screened from the reception area. Approximately 20 square feet per person should be adequate.

Furnishings should be durable and easy to maintain. The area should be furnished with side chairs and a coat rack.

The receptionist should have a desk with personal computer, printer, and VDT. Space may be provided for a filing cabinet. The receptionist should be physically separated from the waiting area but have direct observation of the entire waiting area. A teller type window with security glazing works best. The receptionist should have a duress alarm that reports to security control.

Because many people come to the office to make payments, a separate teller/cashier window should be provided for this purpose. If the volume is high enough, this window may be a full-time cashier's station. The cashier area should be a secure, separate area with a pass-through to the public area.

Access to the FOC private office areas should be controlled by the receptionist with an electronic lock. A separate mail opening area should be located in a secure part of the office.

Assistant Friends of Court, enforcement officers, finance officers, and referees should have private offices that accommodate one or two visitors and are located in areas removed from the noise and traffic of the main office. A typical office should be 120 to 180 square feet and be furnished with a desk, credenza, bookcase, guest chairs, and a filing cabinet. Office equipment will include a personal computer with keyboard and video display terminal, telephone, and printer. Offices should be near clerical support spaces and have access to conference rooms and interview spaces, if provided.

Clerical workstations consist of a desk, with personal computer, visual display terminal, printer, telephone, and other office equipment. Space for filing a cabinet and maybe a side chair also is needed. Approximately 48-100 square feet should be provided. Modular furniture configured in an open-office setting is appropriate.

Clerical support should be located close to the offices they support and have convenient access to a copy area, worktables, and supply and equipment storage areas.

Within the offices there should be a semi-private circulation pattern connecting spaces used by the attorneys and staff.

Security needs of the FOC are similar to those for probation offices. Persons visiting the office should be received at a supervised reception area, and entry to the office should be controlled. There should be a secure cashier station or window with a duress alarm. Private offices should not be isolated and should permit internal observation from the outside. Private offices should be large enough to allow proper separation between officers and clients. Duress alarms should be installed at the reception station and cashier station, if present. The offices should have duress alarms or be designed so that the caseworker is located nearest the exit.



Office equipment generally includes a paper shredder, facsimile machine, personal computers, network server, photo copiers, printers, work table, filing cabinets, and metal supply cabinets. These should be organized in an efficient manner to allow easy access from all areas of the office.

All areas of the office should be accessible to persons with disabilities. This includes the counter and reception areas, staff offices, hearing or interview rooms, and office support areas.

Ideally, all work and waiting areas should have natural lighting. This promotes a more pleasant environment for both the clients and staff. There should be a quiet and relaxing atmosphere because of the stressful nature of the work.

Each workstation will likely be equipped with a personal computer or terminal, video display monitor, modem, camera for video conferencing, telephone, printer, and scanner. All workstations and offices should be equipped with adequate electrical supply, two data terminals, and two voice terminals.

### **3.5 THE PROSECUTING ATTORNEY (OPTIONAL)**

The prosecutor investigates and prosecutes criminal cases, assists victims and prosecution witnesses appearing in court. The Prosecutor also presents cases to the Grand Jury for indictment. Offices must accommodate the Prosecutor, prosecuting attorneys and staff, visiting private attorneys, witnesses, law enforcement officers, and the general public. Because only a small portion of the work occurs in the courtroom, the Prosecutor requires a great deal of flexibility and variety in the kinds of space needed.

While it is not essential for the Prosecutor to be located in the courthouse, it is beneficial to both the Court and the Prosecutor's Office to be within easy access. If located in another facility, it is important that the Prosecutor have offices near the courthouse, because of the need to be present in court for long periods and to have access to court records and personnel. When the Prosecutor is located outside the courthouse, a work area or field office should be provided in the courthouse for use by attorneys while in the courthouse. Office sizes will range from 120 to 150 square feet for assistant prosecuting attorneys.

In addition to the general office activities, attorneys need to be able to interview witnesses and police officers, conduct legal research, maintain case files, conduct investigations, and prepare written reports and documents. These activities require reception and waiting areas, interview rooms, record storage areas, clerical offices, private attorney offices, conference rooms, library, mail sorting and clerical workrooms, supply and equipment storage areas, staff lounge, forensic services, and library.

A special need of the prosecutor is secure storage of evidence. It is critical to effective prosecution that evidence be stored in tamper-proof areas. Access to evidence storage areas should be restricted in order to maintain the chain of custody, and storage areas should be equipped with metal shelving and tamper-proof doors with locks.

The office should be provided a reception and waiting area where visitors may wait. Most visitors will not remain in the waiting area for long periods, but the accommodations should be comfortable and pleasant. Visitors in the waiting area should not be able to look into the work areas of the defender's office. Excessive noise from office and clerical spaces should be screened from the reception area. Approximately 20 square feet per person should be adequate.

Furnishings should be durable and easy to maintain. The area should be furnished with side chairs, a coat rack and table.



## SECTION 3

### COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

The receptionist should have a desk with personal computer, printer, and VDT. Space may be provided for a filing cabinet. The receptionist should be physically separated from the waiting area but have direct observation of the entire waiting area. A teller type window works best. Access to the office should be controlled by the receptionist with an electronic lock. The Prosecutor's Office should project an image compatible with that of a private law firm and should be comparable to that of the judges.

The office should be located in an area of the building that is easily accessible to the law enforcement officers. It also should be accessible to the courtrooms, law library, and the clerks' offices. Attorneys also should have private access to the Grand Jury room and may require access to the building's central holding area. In a multi-story facility it would appropriately be located on an upper floor away from the congestion of the main floor, but should not be located close to the Public Defender's office or adjacent to the judicial chambers. It is also desirable to have a private and secure access to the courthouse's secure corridors, as there may be times when in-custody defendants may need to be interviewed.

The prosecutor's private office should have a small reception area, space for a personal secretary, and a conference area in which to meet and hold small conferences. In larger offices, the office should be close to division chiefs and administrative staff. The personal office space should be approximately 250 to 325 square feet.

Furnishings should include a large desk, bookshelves, four to five chairs, small work or conference table, coat closet, and possibly a toilet.

Trial attorneys should have private offices that accommodate two to three visitors and are located in areas removed from the noise and traffic of the main office. A typical office for an attorney should be 120 to 150 square feet, and furnished with a desk, credenza, bookcase, several chairs, and a filing cabinet. Equipment will include a personal computer with keyboard and video display terminal, telephone, and printer. Law clerks, interns, and temporary staff may use semi-private offices. Offices should be near clerical support spaces. Attorneys should have access to conference rooms, interview space, and legal research materials. The following Figures 3-16 and 3-17 illustrate office configurations based upon 192 and 168 square feet

Figure 3-16  
Office Configuration – 192 Square Feet

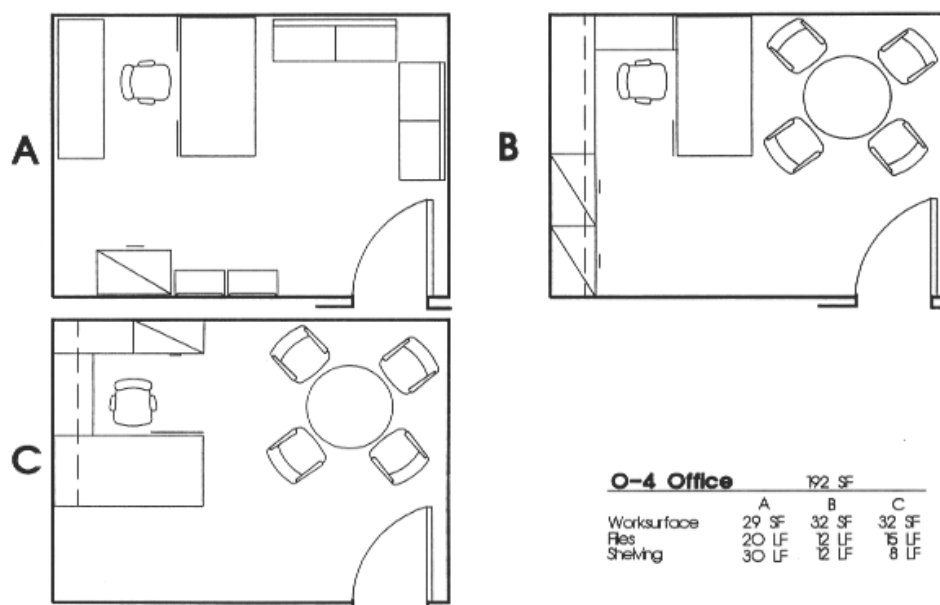
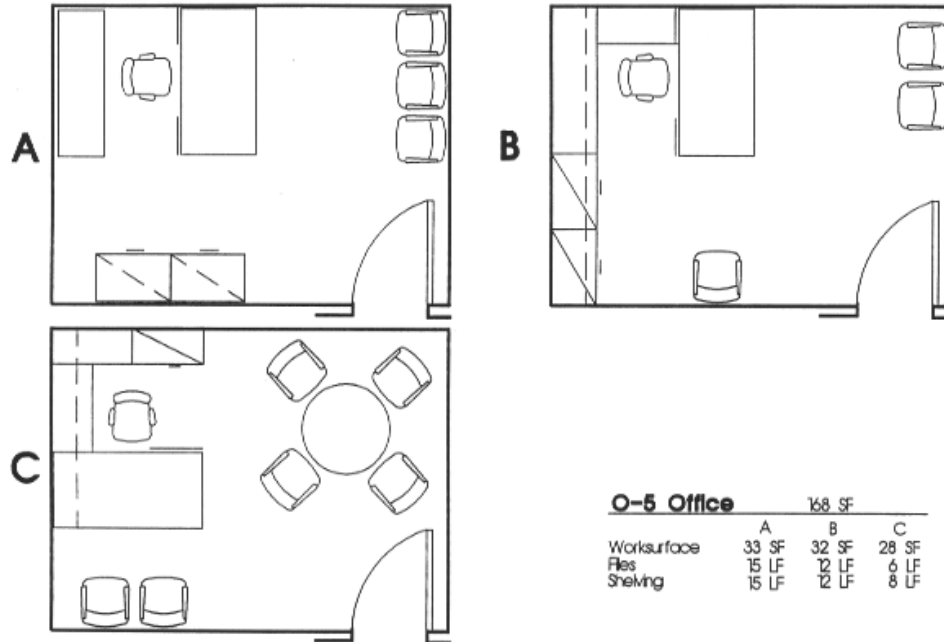






Figure 3-17  
Office Configuration – 168 Square Feet



Clerical support is provided in a central location. Clerical workstations consist of a desk with personal computer, VDT, printer, telephone, and other office equipment. Space for filing a cabinet and maybe a side chair also is needed. Approximately 64 –80 square feet should be provided.

Clerical support should be located close to the attorneys. In a small office, secretarial support might best be located together in a central area. In large offices, support staff may be assigned to a team of attorneys and dispersed into several work clusters. Clerical support should have convenient access to a copy area with worktables and supply and equipment storage areas.

Within the offices, there should be a semi-private circulation pattern connecting spaces used by the attorneys and staff.

It is anticipated that attorneys will be connected to an office computer network (LAN) which may be connected to a larger wide area network, with access to legal data bases and criminal history files. Each attorney's work area requires normal electrical supply and normal room lighting with task lighting at their desk.

The office also will require other shared equipment including facsimile machines, television and VCR, photocopiers, shredders, and video conferencing equipment. (Attorneys may eventually have desktop video conferencing capability.)

The clerical area also will require personal computer workstations with video display monitors, printers, and possibly a scanner. Each workstation should have two quadriplex electrical outlets, two phone jacks, and two data jacks.

Conference and interview rooms should be equipped for video conferencing, video taping, and recording interviews and conferences.



## **3.6 MAGISTRATES AND REFEREE HEARING ROOMS**

There has been a trend in the recent past to include a number of smaller special purpose courtrooms or hearing rooms in court facilities. This is a disadvantage in that these areas are not as flexible whenever changes occur. However, smaller hearing rooms are suitable for arbitration and mediation, as well as minor infractions cases. Hearing rooms can be formal or informal depending on their use.

A more formal hearing room is basically a small courtroom without a jury box and with limited spectator seating. It should be furnished similar to a courtroom with a raised judge's bench and tables for litigants and attorneys. Informal hearings can be held in a conference room-like setting. Participants at informal hearings sit around a conference table with the judge, magistrate, or referee at one end.

Hearing rooms should be located adjacent to the public circulation area and have restricted, secure circulation for the court personnel. Larger more formal hearing rooms should accommodate up to 20 people, requiring 600 to 800 square feet depending on the layout. Smaller informal hearing rooms that may accommodate between six to 12 people would need 200 to 400 square feet.

Magistrates and Referees should have private offices of approximately 120-150 square feet with access from the private corridors of the facility and located near their assigned hearing room.

### **3.6.1 Regional Diagnostic Hearing Room**

While this function is generally located within a mental health facility, the setting should follow the space standards and ambiance of a Magistrate's courtroom. The space required is generally a Hearing Room that should follow the space criteria defined in Section 3.6 above.

## **3.7 PROBATION OFFICES**

Probation departments are part of the judicial process, yet many jurisdictions do not locate these offices in court facilities. These offices often are located in other facilities in the community but may be located with the courts to increase efficiency of operation.

The design of a probation office is similar to a general office setting. Probation officers need areas to conduct confidential conversations with their clients. Many times the officers have their own private office, but shared work areas with open landscape workstations can be used, if there are sufficient designated interview rooms available. Other requirements include a waiting area, cashier payment area, conference room, and often a urinalysis lab and toilet, if the office conducts drug tests. The office sizes could range from 120 to 150 square feet for most functions.

The probation office should be located near the main entry of the facility, if possible, due to the high volume of public traffic involved. If the probation office is not located in the court facility, it is desirable to have a designated office(s) in the court facility for probation personnel to work when involved in court activities. In addition, many probation offices have evening and/or weekend activities, such as classes and counseling programs. In these cases, access to the facility, especially if a mixed-use facility, should be easily accommodated by the public.

Security needs in the probation office include a secured area for cash payment, either with a teller type counter arrangement or separate secure room and duress alarms in areas where personnel are alone with clients. Ideally, probation payment should be made with the court cashier.



## 3.8 JUDICIAL SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

For the courthouse to function properly, several support functions are essential. The following paragraphs discuss some of the points to be considered in the design of support spaces.

### 3.8.1 Jury Assembly

Jury duty is a public service performed by thousands of Michigan residents each year. In many instances, jury duty is the only exposure many people will have with the justice system, and it should be a comfortable and pleasant experience.

Jury service typically last from one day to one week, but persons chosen for a lengthy trial may end up serving for as long as several months. Persons reporting for jury duty should be treated with dignity and made to feel as comfortable as possible. All amenities should be provided within a controlled area in order to make jurors feel safe.

In large courthouses, where several jury trials may be held on the same day, the size of the jury pool may be large, requiring special dedicated areas. In smaller courthouses where the need for jury trials is limited, no special areas may be needed except an enlarged jury deliberation room or conference room which may be pressed into service several times a year. In some smaller communities, the courtroom may double as the jury assembly area.

The juror assembly room may consist of two distinct spaces: an assembly or orientation area with classroom type seating for prospective jurors and a waiting lounge for selected jurors. Because jurors may wait long periods before being called, there should be enough chairs for each juror to have a seat.



Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

Staff typically consists of from one to as many as five or six jury clerks in larger counties. The jury staff should be located in the assembly area whenever persons are waiting. Staff should have their own entrance separate from the public entrance and a private work area.

An initial reception area should be provided for jurors to check in, receive badges, and store personal belongings. The size of the adjacent workstation should be sufficient for clerks to call jury panels, prepare jury lists, and arrange payment to jurors.

Space should be available for passive recreation, such as reading, television, table games, and refreshments. The size of the jury assembly/orientation area will depend on the number of jurors commonly called for court. The space required is approximately 15 square feet per juror. A variety of seating may be



used: reading and work carrels require 30 to 35 square feet per juror; table seating requires 25 square feet per juror; casual seating 20 to 25 square feet per juror; and theater seating 8-10 square feet per juror. Theater seating, however, is needed only for orientation, which lasts from 30 to 60 minutes during the day.

Additional spaces include toilets, a vending area, a coat closet, and a storage area for personal belongings. Space should also be planned for court employees based upon the court's operational practices. At a minimum, a check-in desk or counter, located near the entrance to the room, is required. Ideally, jury staff should have a separate private office with windows that look onto the assembly room.

The rooms should be well ventilated and acoustically treated to lower interior noise and reduce disruptions to adjacent offices. Natural light is important, although if the room is located on the ground floor, windows should be high to prohibit persons outside from communicating with potential jurors.

All jury assembly areas should be fully accessible to persons with a disability and accommodate wheelchairs. Assistive listening devices should be available for hearing impaired persons.

Jury assembly areas are best located on a lower floor of the courthouse but not in the basement. The major advantages of having the assembly area located on the main floor are ease of access from the public entrance and fewer people needing to use elevators and escalators to reach the court floors during the peak morning hours. The primary disadvantage is the need to transport jurors who are not selected through the public circulation routes between the courtrooms and assembly area. For convenience, it is helpful if the assembly room is near the snack bar or vending area, if a vending area is not provided within the jury assembly area.

Transporting jurors to the courtroom is a major problem in larger courthouses, particularly when everyone is trying to use the public elevators at the same time in the morning. Using a freight elevator to move jurors or making one of the regular public elevators large enough to hold an entire jury panel should be considered.

Some jurors may wish to do personal or business work during their wait and should be provided with quiet work carrels or booths consisting of desk, chair, telephone, and electrical outlets. A vending area providing snacks, soft drinks, and coffee should be furnished in addition to a drinking fountain. Each jury assembly area should have male and female restrooms that are handicapped accessible.

Clearly displayed signs should guide jurors to the jury assembly area, especially if the area is located away from the main public entrance. The room should have adequate outlets for a TV monitor, VCR, a public address system, as well as adequate power and cabling for computer terminals and printers installed in the staff work area. Courts with jury call-in systems require approximately one direct phone line per 75 jurors. Consideration should be given to providing cable TV hookups.

### **3.8.2 Grand Jury**

The use of grand juries is rare in Michigan and no special facilities are required.

### **3.8.3 Law Library**

Every courthouse has a collection of legal reference materials that may be used by the judge(s), prosecutor, public defender, other court offices, private attorneys, and the general public<sup>3</sup>. Often, the judges and court

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<sup>3</sup> The legislature is to provide for the establishment and support of public libraries, which shall be available to all residents of the state under regulations adopted by the governing bodies thereof. All fees assessed and collected in the several counties, townships, and cities for any breach of the penal laws shall be exclusively applied to the support of such public libraries, and



offices maintain their own limited reference materials in their offices or a small office library. Most courts also maintain a separate law library with more extensive reference materials that may be used by attorneys and the general public.

Courts generally maintain several series of legal reference books and periodicals. The size of the collection varies with the court size, the budget and community needs, but at least one law library must be provided by each county. Small libraries are usually managed by a court clerk or bailiff as part of their regular duties. An adequate small library might consist of a small room with sufficient bookshelves to house the existing collection, with additional room for expansion. Courts with very large libraries may have a professional librarian, as well as legal researchers. Such libraries require staff work areas and other facilities found in any general library. All law libraries should have an organized system of shelf storage, provide work areas for library users, and have provisions for monitoring the use of the books.

Law libraries are used primarily for research, most often by judges and attorneys. The library should contain tables for reading and writing. Because books and papers can take up a large amount of space, an ample work surface is needed. The library should be designed to allow control access and the library's contents. Controlling access may be provided by visual surveillance by the staff within the library or by the indirect control of court personnel working nearby. Books may be checked out using an honor system sign-up sheet or may be kept in the room with the help of metal-sensing equipment. The library should be located to facilitate easy access and surveillance by court personnel. At the same time, it must be located near a public area of the building so that the public need not intrude into restricted areas to use it.



Arlington County, Virginia / HLM

The materials, which may be kept in a law library, include bound legal texts with pocket updates, reference books, and law periodicals. These are generally stored in open bookshelves or freestanding stacks. Since each series of books is continually updated and expanded, shelf space should accommodate anticipated increases in library volumes. As a rule of thumb, new libraries should have no more than 50% of the shelf space occupied when they open. To protect the books, they should be kept from exposure to direct sunlight, moisture, and heat. Some larger libraries may require facilities for microfilm reading and storage, card catalogs, or other auxiliary items such as photocopy machines, lounge chairs, and public telephones. Given

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**county law libraries** as provided by law. [Const 1963, Art 8, See 9]

In each county the county treasurer shall credit semiannually to a fund to be known as the county law library fund, from which counties are to be paid an amount that ranges from \$2,000 to \$8,500 depending upon the county's population. This is the extent of state funding. Counties may supplement this with additional financial support. [MCL 600.4851(I); MSA 27A.4851(I)]

The State Court Administrative Office, along with the State Law Library, has approved minimum standards for county law libraries.





the dead weight of book storage, extra precautions should be taken with large law libraries to make sure that the building is structurally strong enough to support the load.

Law libraries are often used for conferences or for taking depositions. This is acceptable as long as these activities do not occur so often that they interfere with normal use of the library.

While many courts still make use of legal reference books, today's computer technology is revolutionizing libraries. Not only are card catalogs automated, most legal references, including statutes, have been imaged and are now available on compact disks or through remote legal research services, such as WESTLAW or LEXUS. Any library built today must be capable of the installation of a juke box for compact disks, a computer server and local area network, and personal computers with video display monitors and printers to be used in accessing, researching, and displaying/printing legal materials that previously were available only in book form. As the use of computers grow, the need for large law libraries will diminish. Courts with only small libraries may do away with their books altogether. It is important that the library space be fully wired for electricity, voice, and data access. In larger libraries, where only older reference materials that are not available on compact disk will need to be kept, the rest of the library may consist of computer workstations for viewing legal references on-line or on compact disk.

- The library should be accessible to judges via restricted circulation. Public access shall be from public circulation.
- The library shall be organized and located to allow supervisory control of the library and its contents by court personnel.
- The library's furnishings need to include bookshelves, worktables, comfortable chairs and a station or other provisions for signing out books. Photocopy machines, microfilm storage cabinets, microfilm readers, public telephones, lounge chairs, computer terminals, personal computers, and card catalogs need to be accommodated.
- Worktables should provide a minimum of twelve square feet of workspace per person.
- Space shall be allocated to accommodate projected growth of the library collection for a reasonable period. Shelving shall be provided for twice the existing collection in the case of newly established facilities.
- All books and reference materials must be accessible to persons in a wheelchair.
- Books and other materials shall be protected from direct exposure to sunlight, heat, and moisture.
- All libraries should be wired for electricity, voice, and data so that as the use of books diminishes, the room can be easily converted to other uses.

For further information on County Law Libraries see ***Minimum Standards for County Law Libraries***, February 1996, issued by the State Court Administrative Office.

### 3.8.4 Attorney Lounge (optional area)

A lounge for the exclusive use of attorneys conducting business in the courthouse is a convenience for members of the bar as well as an indirect benefit to the Courts and court staff. Long waits between trials



or during recesses are not uncommon. Attorneys in private practice, as well as prosecutors and public defenders, may utilize such a facility to conduct other business. The room may be used for group meetings, conferring with colleagues, making telephone calls, and for individual reading, writing or word processing. When such a room is provided, attorneys are able to make more efficient use of waiting periods, so they are more likely to remain in the courthouse where they are readily available when needed in court. Furthermore, having an attorney room available helps to prevent lawyers from waiting in clerical areas, interrupting the work of court personnel.

The attorneys room should be located near the courtrooms and law library. Especially in large court facilities, it may be useful to install a paging system, which allows attorneys to be alerted when they are to appear in court. The attorneys' room should be located on a public circulation path, to allow attorneys easy access. However, access should be restricted to members of the bar, which in some facilities may mean that the room should be kept locked or else supervised. The exact character of the furnishings of the room and the activities are best based on the needs and preferences of the local bar. Generally, attorneys' rooms are lounges, workrooms, or both. Lounge furniture, study tables, electrical outlets for personal notebook computers, and a telephone may be needed. Provision for secure storage of attorneys' coats is desirable as well. The size of the room will, again, depend on local needs.

- Provide a room for attorneys to use while they are in the court facility. This room should be located near the law library and courtrooms.
- Provide lounge chairs, sofas, and study tables as needed.
- Install telephone jacks in the room that attorneys may use to fax documents to their office or access their office's computer network.
- Provide a closet or coat rack for coat storage. In larger facilities, lockers may be provided for belongings as well.
- Control access to the attorneys' room by virtue of its location or by the use of locks.
- In larger facilities, install a paging system that is connected to the courtrooms and the attorneys' room.

### **3.8.5 Law Enforcement Waiting (optional area)**

A law enforcement officer's waiting / workroom serves much the same purpose as the attorney lounge. It provides officers with a designated area outside the public corridors where they can be readily available once court begins, rather than waiting in other court offices or the courtroom itself. Here, they can complete reports, review testimony, make phone calls, converse, and relax before their court appearance or during recesses.

The size of the waiting area will depend upon the number of officers present in the courthouse. Planning should consider at least 25 square feet per officer. It should be located near the courtrooms and be readily accessible from the public corridor. The workroom should be furnished similarly to the attorney lounge, with sofas, chairs, worktables, and telephones.

### **3.8.6 Press and Media Support Facilities (optional area)**

With the introduction of cameras into courtrooms and the use of remote live television coverage of trials and



court event, the needs of the new media have changed considerably. Often the media take up additional space with their cameras and equipment and create problems in the flow of pedestrians in the courthouse.

The need to park trucks and other vehicles near the courthouse also should be considered in planning. A high profile trial may draw news teams from several television stations, requiring additional parking, public waiting space, and places to conduct interviews. Requirements based on the needs of the print media alone are no longer adequate in today's new environment. Every effort should be made to insure that the presence of the press should not disrupt the dignified and decorous atmosphere of the court.

With the exception of a few types of hearings, the press has the right to report on trial events. If cameras are allowed in the courtrooms, space may be designated where news crews may set up their cameras in the courtrooms. Where the court already has an installed video recording system in the courtroom, arrangements may be made for the press to have access to a live feed from the system. This has the added advantage in that the camera angles are controlled by the court, and the judge can have direct control over what is shown.

Another solution for filming in the courtrooms is the construction of a room adjacent to the courtroom with a one-way glass through which they may view and tape the proceedings.

In most multi-judge courts, some accommodations should be made for the day-to-day activities of the print and broadcast media in an area outside the courtroom. Planning may include a press room in the courthouse where members of the different news media may store equipment, work on stories, and wait. Providing space in which they may conduct interviews and work on notes would relieve congestion in the public corridors, helping to make the court less crowded and noisy.

The media room should be equipped with phone lines, and if video recording is present in courtrooms with video feeds connected to the courtrooms, with feed capability to mobile radio and television trucks and equipment. The room also should be furnished with tables and chairs adequate for working, and perhaps storage and workspace for audio equipment, cameras and photographic equipment, and television video equipment. Because the public access is not a critical concern, the location of the press room can be very flexible. Although it should be convenient to courtrooms and external exits to the building, it also should not require the press to pass through restricted or secure areas of the building. Space requirements should not be great but should probably accommodate one person per local newspaper plus extra room for television reporters.

Twenty to twenty-five square feet per reporter is sufficient. There should be adequate acoustical insulation to provide a quiet environment in which to work, as well as to insulate adjacent offices or courtrooms from any typing noise or conversations. A minimum sized space of 100 square feet is suggested.

## **3.9 BUILDING SUPPORT FUNCTIONS**

Building support spaces include the loading dock, mail room, loading dock security screening, loading dock storage, custodial spaces, janitorial closets, maintenance spaces, electrical closets, telecommunications closets, computer rooms, trash collection, recycling areas, vending areas, vending storage space, and shared spaces such as conference rooms.

### **3.9.1 Loading Dock**

All buildings require facilities where supplies, equipment, and other deliveries can be received and where trash and recycle materials can be picked up. Depending upon the size of the courthouse, these facilities



may be no larger than a truck ramp and door at the back of the building or as large as a multi-bay facility that will accommodate several large delivery trucks. Any moderate to large facility may need several loading bays for a recycled paper compactor, trash compactor, deliveries, a mail room, a bulk storage room, a loading dock office, a loading dock security screening area, and a nearby freight elevator.

- The freight elevator should be within easy access of the loading dock bays.
- If included, the recycle trash storage room should be equipped with a fire rated steel roll-up door, opening directly onto the loading dock and recycle compactor unit.
- A dock receiving office is generally required and should be located inside the building with direct access by roll-up door from the loading dock.
- Care should be taken to locate the loading dock away from the building's air intake supply, to avoid bringing fumes into the building.
- In large facilities with frequent deliveries, a loading dock security screening area should be considered. This area should be located immediately adjacent to the loading dock where all packages and deliveries to the building can be screened or x-rayed. If wired for large x-ray machine and metal detector, all delivery personnel entering the building should be required to pass through a metal detector.
- The loading dock should be monitored by CCTV cameras located inside and outside the loading dock. The building's security center should have local and remote control of overhead and access doors. A duress alarm is required in the general loading area, and there should be an intercom between the loading dock security station and the outside loading area.

### **3.9.2 Custodial and Maintenance Services**

Custodial staff will generally require a custodian's office, service closets, storage, and also perhaps a locker area and toilets for custodial staff. Each floor should have at least one distributed janitorial closet at a minimum of 70 usable square feet. Closets generally require a janitor's sink with hot and cold water and contain square mop basin, wall mounted mop rack, and metal wall shelving.

Maintenance services operate and maintain all building equipment, make repairs, perform preventive maintenance, answer service call complaints, and make minor alterations. In support of the mechanical operation, space is needed for a maintenance office, maintenance storage, maintenance workshop, and perhaps locker rooms and toilets. Maintenance areas should be on the same floor with major building equipment such as the air conditioning chiller, heating plant, and electrical switch gear.

In some facilities it may be possible for custodial and maintenance staff to share locker and toilet facilities. If provided, separate locker facilities for male and female staff are needed. All locker rooms and toilets should meet ADA accessibility requirements.

### **3.9.3 Service Elevator**

A separate passenger rated elevator is necessary for the movement of freight, heavy supplies, and equipment. The cab should have additional height and depth to accommodate furniture and other large equipment.



### **3.9.4 Trash and Recycle Removal**

The solid waste disposal system in the building should meet the demands of the building and comply with local ordinances. Required spaces may include a docking bay for a recycle compactor, a recycle storage room near the loading dock, and recycle rooms on each floor.

- Trash and recycle storage areas should have minimal visibility and be separated to a degree from the building's receiving area.
- Recycle trash rooms generally require separate areas for solid waste paper, aluminum, and other materials.
- Care should be taken to locate the building's air intake supply away from the trash and recycle areas.

### **3.9.5 Building Communication Backbone**

The courthouse should be designed with a service entrance room for voice/data/video communication systems. This room should be planned to terminate wiring and to house building electronics and cabling systems. The building should be designed with a backbone/riser facility (or vertical power distribution system) formed by stacking telecommunications and data closets and providing sleeves/slots (for horizontal distribution) through the floors. The backbone/riser facility should extend from the service entrance room to the floor telecommunication closets and provide a pathway for intra-building cable and for a telecommunication system ground.

At least one telecommunication closet should be provided on each floor (two for larger floors) to house floor-level electronics and cross-connect the building backbone to horizontal building wiring. Closets should be positioned so that the maximum cable length from the closet to the termination point is 90 meters. While one closet may serve as much as 20,000 square feet, a more practical guideline is one closet for every 10,000 square feet.

### **3.9.6 Telecommunications and Data Entry Rooms**

A telecommunications and data entry room is needed to serve the entire building. This is the main entry location for all telecommunications and data lines into the building and should include the main connections for all telecommunications equipment, video conferencing/arrestment systems, and network servers for all offices in the building, including any modem connections. From here, telecommunication and data lines go to the building's main technology systems rooms, such as the telecommunications and computer rooms.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an un-interruptible power supply (UPS).

The location of the entrance facility should be coordinated with the location of the electrical power entrance to improve the overall performance of the telecommunications and data systems. It should be planned to terminate wiring for switched networks and to house building-level electronics and cross-connected inter and intra-building cabling systems, using wiring distribution frames/backboards, protective blocks and other equipment required by the telephone and cable utilities, as well as the information technology system.

The room should be approximately 300 square feet and planned to support logical expansion in place or accommodate future equipment and entrance conduits for future expansion. It should be located at ground





level on a perimeter wall adjacent to the local telephone company access, not in the basement where flooding can occur.

The entry room should be equipped with proper lighting for maintenance and provide easy access to equipment.

The room should be positively pressured to prevent dust infiltration. An ambient air temperature of 72 degrees Fahrenheit and 45% relative humidity is generally recommended. A back up system to control room temperature and relative humidity should be on the emergency power panel.

The room should be safe, secure, dust free, and protected by full-height firewalls of at least two-hour rating with no windows and no false ceilings. Ceilings should be waterproofed. The firewall ratings will be found in local building codes.

### **3.9.7 Telecommunications Systems and Information Technology Room**

A separate telecommunications and computer room needs to be provided to serve the courts, clerks, and all other offices located in the building. The room should contain all of the building and court's communications and computer equipment. If the court and other offices have separate computer networks, the room will need to be partitioned for the different servers and networks.

Access to the file servers and telecommunication devices for installation, upgrades, and maintenance of equipment is necessary. The computer rooms should be equipped with proper fire extinguisher devices and smoke detectors. Also, a raised floor system for easy access to wiring and cables should be a requirement.

The communications/computer server room should have controlled temperature and humidity just as the cable entrance room. A/C units should be on emergency generated power and should be independent from the building air. For security and temperature reasons the room should be located away from outside windows and doors.

All equipment should be protected from power surges and brown outs with the installation of power conditioning equipment and an un-interruptible power supply (UPS). The electrical feed, including neutral and ground, for the technology room should be isolated from the rest of the building's electrical system.

Cable runs should not be placed in areas where high electromagnetic field strength exists. The size of these rooms will depend upon equipment selected, but a square foot per piece of equipment is a base size.

### **3.9.8 Telecommunications Closets**

There should be a minimum of two telecommunications closets designed to house intermediate distribution frames for data/voice/video provided per floor, stacked vertically and located close to the building service area, preferably in the core area. Wiring should not exceed 90 meters.

Closets should be positioned so that it is possible to gain access without disrupting normal office work and sized to allow an engineer to work within the closet and provide front and back access to the cabinets with space for additional wall mounted data patching frames. The closets should be at least 110 square feet.

Access flooring may be used to accommodate the cables entering from the riser, connecting to the frames, and accessing the secondary distribution system.

Telecommunications pathways, or conduit, should not be located in elevator shafts.



Closets should have waterproof ceilings and no windows. HVAC ducting and pipe work should be kept out of the telecommunications risers. The minimum size closet will be 60 square feet for most equipment.

### **3.9.9 Electrical Power and Electrical Closets**

The vertical power distribution system of the building should be designed for easy change and modification through vertical stacking of electrical closets and provide simplified modular connections to horizontal distribution systems. A minimum of two electrical closets per floor are needed.

Electrical power distribution should be coordinated with the design of the telecommunications / grounding systems. Some equipment is susceptible to radiation from power cabling (power cabling that runs parallel to communications cabling may induce currents in cables). Lighting circuits in which the live and neutral conduits are not run close and parallel may cause distortion on computer screens. These problems should be controlled by segregation and good cabling practice, and power cables should be separated from voice and data cables in their conduits where possible.

### **3.9.10 Vending and Food Service**

In larger courthouses, it is common to provide a vending operation or some type of food service. Even when food service is provided in the building, vending service is also required and is typically located at the cafeteria, jury assembly area, and staff areas of the building. A vending contractor storage area may be provided near the loading dock with convenient access to the freight elevator. It is suggested that vending not be provided in the public areas of court floors as food or drinks are not allowed in the courtrooms.

### **3.9.11 Shared Conference Facilities**

Shared areas of the building may include larger conference rooms that can be shared by all building occupants.

Conference rooms should be located off the main public circulation, but staff located in the building should be able to enter and leave the conference rooms without passing through the public reception and waiting area, or extensively using public circulation.

Conference rooms generally should be wired for video conferencing and fitted with a projection screen, white board, or other type of marker board for presentations. Outlets are needed for audiovisual equipment and a P/A system.

Electrical outlets and data jacks should be available so that users may make use of laptop computers and have access to court automation networks.

A service unit and small equipment storage room or alcove may be provided as part of the conference room.

### **3.9.12 Building Management and Storage**

An office may be provided for a building manager if one is located in the facility.

The number and size of storage and supply areas will depend on the size of the courthouse. It is advantageous to locate these areas close to the service elevator and the loading dock for ease in

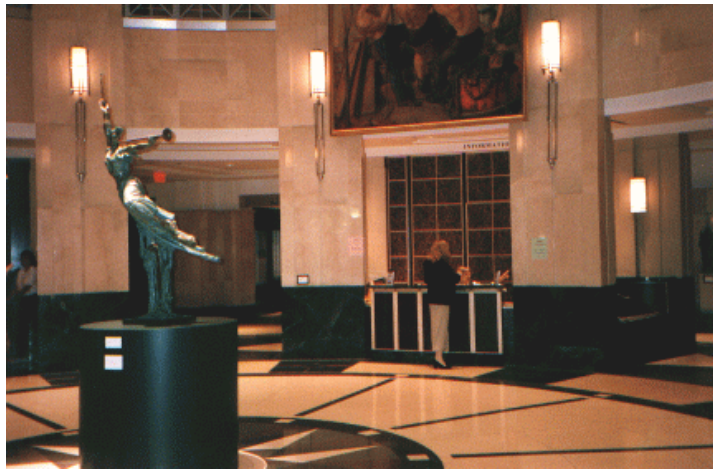


transporting supplies to and from offices and for receiving vendor supplies and equipment from the loading dock.

### 3.9.13 Lobby

The courthouse serves both a functional and symbolic purpose. Functionally, it needs to handle large numbers of people, particularly on days when jurors are reporting to the courthouse or during early hours when most people are reporting to court for the day. If a security station is placed at the entrance, sufficient area should be available for persons to form a queue without having to wait outside in inclement weather.

The symbolism expressed by the building's exterior should continue through the interior of the building, commencing with the lobby. In older courthouses, grand public spaces conveyed dignity and grandeur and provided a sense of order and orientation to users. The lobby should convey an image of the importance of the functions performed in the building. It is also necessary, however, to balance the spatial allocation of the public lobby and its grandeur with fiscal constraints. Ultimately, providing more than minimum space not only reflects concern for user perspectives and celebrates human and societal values, it recognizes that people come to a courthouse to resolve serious problems in a dignified setting. As the first interior space encountered by court participants, the building lobby is the architectural element that immediately translates these values to the user.



Orange County Justice Center, Florida / HLM

### 3.9.14 Public Circulation, Elevators, and Escalators

Courthouses generate a high volume of traffic during the course of a day. A clear and adequate circulation system using stairs, escalators, and elevators is needed in multi-story buildings to move people expediently.

Because of the height of many modern court facilities, stairs are generally limited to life safety exit requirements and to quick access between two floors. Stairs also do not permit access to the physically impaired. For these reasons, escalators and elevators have become the primary means of moving people, even in two-story facilities.

Both elevators and escalators have their uses, and one system supplements the other. Escalators are the fastest and most efficient way to move a large number of people in an uninterrupted manner, especially between the lower two to three floors. These levels should contain the most active functions, including the clerk's office, high volume courtrooms, jury assembly areas, and other highly public areas of the court. These activities necessitate the movement of a large number of people



Denton County Courts Building, Texas /  
Philips Swager Associates



quickly from the public entrance without creating a large queue at the elevator banks. Escalators cannot, however, serve the needs of the physically impaired or disabled, and they are impractical for higher floors because of the space and time they require to travel beyond several floors.



US Courthouse, Maryland / HOK

Elevators, on the other hand, are good for moving small volumes of people quickly to the upper floors. Other advantages are their capability to serve the physically disabled or impaired, transporting injured or ill individuals during emergencies, and to move equipment, furniture, and supplies.

The number of elevators planned for a courthouse should be based on a number of factors, including the volume of people at peak periods, the time interval between stops, the cab capacity, and speed of the elevator. The allocation of courthouse elevators should be calculated on the highest capacity of riders during peak times of the day and week. In addition, separate elevator systems should be planned for moving the public, court staff and judges, and in-custody defendants. Private elevators, which open onto restricted areas of the building, can be programmed to respond to only a card or key access. One of the most common deficiencies found in most older courthouses is the lack of elevator capacity.

### 3.9.15 Public Restrooms

Court facilities should include an adequate number of public restrooms. Because of the large number of people and the often-long periods of waiting involved, restrooms will be frequently used.

Male and female restrooms should be grouped together rather than located in different areas of the floor to make them easier to find. A single location also deters visitors from wandering through the building in search of the restroom. The largest bank of restrooms should be located on the main floor. Other toilet facilities should be located on the court floors near the public-waiting areas. Additional facilities may be provided on floors containing only office functions. Code requirements should be adhered to in the distribution of toilet facilities for the physically impaired. Baby changing stations should be considered for some of the public restrooms.

For security and noise considerations, restrooms should not directly adjoin the courtrooms. Separate toilet facilities should be located in the private staff areas of the courthouse for the use by court staff.

### 3.9.16 Day and Child Care

Some newer court facilities are being built with day care facilities for children of court employees or temporary childcare services for children accompanying their parents to court. The provision of day or childcare services in the courthouse depends on the preferences of the facility owners, users, and community.

Three additional factors that should be considered are that day care services generally require that children receive a certain amount of outdoor exercise and recreation during the day. Because urban court facilities are often multi-story buildings located in densely urban areas, outdoor recreational space is often unavailable. Second, the cost and operational implications should be appraised. Court facility construction may range from \$100 to nearly \$200 a square foot. Space for a childcare facility located in the courthouse may be much more expensive than what could be found elsewhere. Third, and probably most important, is the issue of security. The location of a day care facility in a public building that maybe the target of bomb threats or other acts of violence may be highly questionable.





The inclusion of temporary child care for children accompanying their parent(s) to court, however, has advantages, in that persons coming to the courthouse with their small children would have a place where their children could be cared for so that they do not disrupt or delay the proceedings or disturb others in the building. It is not unusual to see small children roaming the halls of courthouses or even playing games on the floor, while their parents are in court. When provided, such temporary facilities help to reduce noise and congestion in the corridors and leave the parents free to concentrate fully on their business.



Child Care Center, Riverside Family Court, California

Such facilities need to contain a workstation or private offices for supervisors, a paging system to call parents, and durable furnishings designed for children. The facility should be equipped with restrooms suitable for children, a kitchenette, and storage space for toys and supplies. The rooms should be soundproof and removed from the major public circulation areas.

### **3.9.17 Mail Room**

A mail room is a necessity in any large court facility because of the large volumes of mail received by the clerk's offices, particularly in traffic and misdemeanor cases, where many fines are paid by mail, and the Friend of the Court where child support payments are made and received. The mail room is best located near the central receiving or loading dock, near a service or freight elevator, which allows staff to transport mail to and from the upper stories of the building. As noted in Section 3.3.14, the mailroom should be secure with ample glazing for observation.

### **3.9.18 Security Office and Fire Control Center**

The security office and fire control center is where building security personnel are located. Also located here may be protective equipment, such as security and duress alarm panels, fire alarm, emergency elevator controls, public address system, and fire alarm annunciator panel. All of these systems, as well as data and emergency lighting system, should be backed up with emergency generators.

The center is often best located at the front of the entry restricted access point. All power and lighting for this room should be from the building's emergency electrical service with remote battery backup.

### **3.9.19 Central Security Control and Security Stations**

The security control station serves as the central core of court security operations and should be located in a centralized area within the courthouse from which all security zones and safety alarm systems are monitored and assistance dispatched. From this unit, the courthouse may be monitored through the use of closed circuit television systems. The control unit should have an equipment room and toilets for staff.

There should be separate and secure circulation for in-custody prisoners from the central holding areas to all court floors. Attorney/prisoner interview booths, with appropriate privacy, should be provided in the central holding area where attorneys may speak with their clients prior to court.





The size of the security control unit will vary with the size of the court facility. A minimum of 100 square feet should be provided, with larger units being 400 to 500 square feet.

The security control unit should be centrally located near the main public entrance or in the central holding area. Additional security stations should be located on the court floors, near the public circulation areas. The office should contain a combination desk and control panel, a lockable file cabinet, and equipment storage locker.

Security stations of 60 to 100 square feet may be appropriate at key circulation intersections within the courthouse where response staff will provide corridor security and response to calls for assistance. These stations may be open with limited communication equipment or enclosed with telecommunication of alarm equipment.

### 3.9.20 Central Prisoner Holding and Transport

In-custody defendants and witnesses need to be separated from the public, while at the same time maintaining their safety and constitutional rights. Prisoner detention facilities increase the efficiency of the courts by allowing in-custody defendants to be located close to the courtroom at the scheduled time of appearance. Even in jurisdictions where the jail is adjacent to the courthouse, it may be more efficient to include holding and staging areas within the courthouse for securing and transporting prisoners.

Modern courthouses generally have two detention areas: a central holding and staging area for transferring prisoners to the court floors and a staging and holding area adjacent to the courtrooms for rapid movement to and from the courtrooms. (Smaller facilities may need only one set of holding facilities, either close to the courtrooms or centrally located at the prisoner entrance.) Gun lockers should be provided outside of the prisoner holding area for a minimum of 10 handguns.

The central holding area should consist of the following elements: a control center, staging area, holding cells, and visitation booths. The control center monitors the operations of the holding area. The officer manning the station should have a direct view into the holding cells or use monitors and should be able to monitor or control all entrances and exits. The station should be secured from unauthorized entry and should include a dedicated staff toilet.



Central Holding Area, Kane County, Illinois / HOK - George Lambros Photographer

Sufficient staging areas for transporting inmates should be provided near a sallyport entrance (an interlocking vestibule with doors operating in tandem) as well as the secure elevators. Corridors should be wide enough to prohibit inmates from grabbing officers and to allow adequate two-way passage.

Separate holding facilities for men and women need to be provide. If these holding areas are co-located, there should be sight and sound separation between the sexes. If juveniles must be held in the same area as adults, additional sight and sound separation is required.

Group-holding cells should allow a minimum of 15 square feet per person, excluding benches. State standards should be consulted to determine the required sizes of holding cells. The minimum size of a group cell should be at least 150 square feet. Individual cells for segregating prisoners should be at least 52 square feet.



Attorney/client meeting booths may be provided at the central holding facility, on the court floors, or both. These booths should be approximately 60 square feet and divided with appropriate security glazing or a wire mesh to separate the parties. Attorneys should not have to enter the holding areas to enter the conference booth. A small contact conference area of 60 to 80 square feet may also be provided to allow for the review and signing of documents.

Temporary holding cells for prisoners awaiting court appearances should conform to appropriate state correctional and American Correctional Association standards for lighting, ventilation, heating, and cooling in short-term holding and detention facilities. The Michigan Department of Corrections, County Jail Services Unit (Grandview Plaza Building, P.O. Box 30003, Lansing, Michigan 48909, Telephone: 517-373-3515), provides free handbooks for the construction and administration of jails and lockups.

Holding facilities lighting fixtures and ventilation shafts should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons. The cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture. It is extremely important that holding areas be soundproofed to minimize disruption in the courtrooms.

All areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

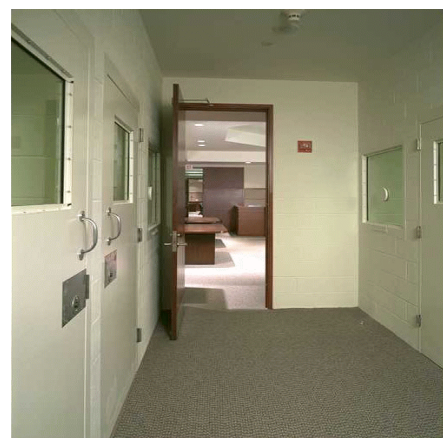
Furnishings should be fixed and rated for maximum security. Lighting fixtures and air-conditioning and ventilating registers should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons.

Every cell should have its own toilet facility. This will eliminate the need for staff persons to transport inmates to and from toilets. These facilities may be combined wash basin and toilet units constructed of either stainless steel or porcelain. Toilets and drains should be installed along a wall on the corridor side of the holding facility or along an accessible service duct so that repairs can be made from the outside. Drains for sinks, toilets, and wash drains should be large enough so that they cannot be easily blocked. The holding cells should have solid ceilings. A modesty panel should be provided around the cell toilets to maintain proper privacy. Drains are necessary in any cell with toilets.

### 3.9.21 Court Floor Holding Areas

In larger courthouses, separate prisoner holding cells should be located adjacent to the courtrooms in addition to the central holding facility located adjacent to the secured prisoner entrance to the courthouse. These court floor holding facilities are best located between pairs of courtrooms and serviced by a designated prisoner elevator that transports prisoners to and from the central holding area or entrance.

The short-term holding area should consist of a security officer station, holding cells, and entrance vestibule in front of the elevator, and, if possible, attorney/client meeting booths. The security station need not be enclosed and should provide the security officer with direct visibility to all areas. Group-holding cells should allow 15 square feet per inmate. The minimum recommended size is 150 square feet. Individual cells, used for segregation of prisoners, should be a minimum of 52 square feet. All court floor temporary-holding areas should conform to appropriate state and American Correctional standards for lighting, ventilation, heating, and cooling. There should be separate holding facilities for men and women with sight and sound separation.



Denton County Court Holding Area / Phillip Swagger Associates



The cells should be well ventilated, well lighted, and well maintained. Lighting fixtures and ventilation shafts should be secured in place to prevent their removal and use as weapons. The cells should be equipped with vandal-resistant furniture, such as a bench that extends around the interior wall.

It is not unusual for in-custody defendants to attempt to disrupt court proceedings by shouting insults, using abusive language, banging on walls, or flushing toilets. Such noise from court floor-holding cells disrupts court proceedings, causes embarrassment, and intimidates witnesses or jurors. It is critical that the holding area be soundproofed so that no sound from the holding area is heard in the courtroom.

The holding areas should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

The walls and ceiling should be reinforced. Removable drop ceilings should be avoided. The interior finish and toilets should be vandal-proof. A small viewing window on the courtroom door is required. It should be possible to view the interior of all cells.

Consideration should be given to providing each cell with its own toilet. This will eliminate the need to transport prisoners to and from toilet facilities. Toilets may be a combined wash basin and toilet unit constructed of either stainless steel or porcelain. Toilets and drains should be installed along a wall on the corridor side of the holding facility or along an accessible service duct so that repairs can be made from the outside. Drains are necessary in any cell in which toilets are provided.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

At the outset of this report, a recommendation was made that these design guidelines be viewed as a work in progress simply because changes in building systems and technology are constantly occurring and should be added to the material in the Design Guidelines as regularly as possible. Neither the process of managing the project nor the design steps are likely to change frequently, but better methods of acoustical, access, and climate control, for example, will evolve over time. Information technology is the one aspect of the future courthouses that will most assuredly change on a regular basis. By anticipating better systems and electronic equipment, properly sized utility chases can be accommodated initially. Whatever else happens in the future operation of the courts, a very safe assumption should be that management information systems and electronically-based, interactive, and remote communication technology will change rapidly and will significantly impact the efficient operation of the court.

These guidelines extended the Standards developed in 1980. Over time, the 1999 Design Guidelines will also require expansion and modification to accept the challenge of an accessible and effective judiciary. As technology changes, space standards for every function of the modern court will also change. Therefore, all space standards should be evaluated periodically and revised to capture the various changes in technology and methods of operation.



### 3.11 SUMMARY OF MINIMUM SPACE REQUIREMENTS

To summarize the major space standards that have been discussed throughout this document, this final section has been prepared.

ACTIVITY AREA	MINIMUM AREA REQUIREMENTS			COMMENTS
<b>Courtroom</b>	1,300 - 2500 sf			Includes litigation and spectator areas.  These figures refer to litigation area only. Total courtroom area is derived by determining the number of spectators to be accommodated within the courtroom and multiplying by approximately 10-15 square feet per spectator and then adding the recommended litigation area square footage. For detailed information on courtrooms see Section 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.
	<u>Width</u>	<u>Depth</u>	<u>Total Area</u>	
Formal Non-Jury Hearing Room	28 ft	30 ft	840 sf	
Jury Courtroom (1-Tier Jury Box)	32 ft	32 ft	1,024 sf	
Jury Courtroom (2-Tier Jury Box)	36-38 ft	32 ft	1,152-1,216 sf	
Jury Courtroom (3-Tier Jury Box)	40-42 ft	32 ft	1,280-1,344 sf	
Ceremonial Jury Trial Courtroom	40 ft	34 ft	1,360 sf	
<b>Judicial Bench</b>	40 -70 sf			Elevated from floor level a minimum of 14 inches. Space includes a minimum of 6 feet behind the bench. For additional information see Section 3.1.3.
<b>Witness Stand</b>	50 - 80 sf			Requires a minimum of 10 square feet wheelchair space and an unobstructed turning diameter of 5 feet. Location should be a minimum of 7 feet from closest seated juror. For additional information see Section 3.1.5.
<b>Jury Box</b>	10 - 12 sf/Juror			A minimum of one wheelchair space, located within the defined area of the jury box must be provided. Jury box should be located a minimum of 7 feet from nearest spectator and a minimum of 4 feet from nearest litigant/counsel table. For additional information see Section 3.1.6.
8 Person - District/Probate Ct. (6 Jurors + 2 Alternates)	80 -96 sf			
14 Person - Circuit Ct. (12 Jurors + 2 Alternates)	140 - 168 sf			
<b>Courtroom Clerk’s Station</b>	30 - 40 sf			Elevated from floor level a minimum of 7 inches. Additional space for ramp or lift is not included. For additional information see Section 3.1.4.
<b>Litigant / Counsel Tables</b>	50 - 80 sf each			Area requirements include a minimum of 2 feet of movement space behind the tables and chairs. Each table should accommodate 2-4 people. Minimum separation between tables should be 4 feet. Minimum distance to the bench should be 10-16 feet. Minimum distance from the back of litigant/counsel chairs to front bar of the spectator area should be 6 feet. For additional information see Section 3.1.7.
<b>Bailiff’s Station</b>	12 - 25 sf			Location should provide clear sight lines for entire courtroom. For additional information see Section 3.1.9.
<b>Witness Waiting Rooms</b>	15 - 20 sf / person 100 sf minimum			Requires room access control. For additional information see Section 3.1.11.



## SECTION 3

### COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

ACTIVITY AREA	MINIMUM AREA REQUIREMENTS	COMMENTS
<b>Attorney / Client Conference Rooms</b>	15 - 20 sf / person 100 sf minimum	Rooms may be interchangeable with Witness Waiting Rooms. For additional information see Section 3.1.12.
<b>Courtroom Entry Vestibule</b>	70 - 90 sf	Minimum distance between door sets should be 8-10 feet. For additional information see Section 3.1.13.
<b>Court Recorder / Reporter</b>  Litigation Area  Private Office	  35 - 70 sf  100 - 120 sf	  Located within the well with unobstructed view of bench, litigant/counsel tables, and witness box. Separate office in Judicial set. For additional information see Section 3.1.2.1.
<b>Jury Deliberation Rooms</b>  14 Person Room (Circuit Court)  8 Person Room (District/Probate Court)	  280 sf + restrooms & vestibule (280 - 450 sf total area)  160 sf + restrooms & vestibule (240 - 280 sf total area)	  Minimum deliberation area width is 14 feet for 14 person room and 12 feet for 8 person room. Total area square footage includes restroom(s) and entry vestibule. Deliberation areas square footage excludes space needed for restroom(s) and vestibule. Room should be located near the courtroom and accessed by a secured circulation corridor. For additional information see Section 3.1.14.
<b>Judge's Chambers</b>  Judge's Private Office  Secretary  Reception/ Waiting Area  Law Clerk  Bailiff's Station  Robing Room	  280 - 500 sf  100 - 120 sf  20 sf / visitor 40 - 60 sf minimum  120 sf  40 - 50 sf  50 sf	  Depending upon the space allotted the judge's private office; a judicial conference room may be required. Chambers should be located near the courtroom and access should be through a private and secured circulation corridor from both the courtroom and judge's parking. A Robing Room is only necessary if chambers are located away from the courtroom. Bailiff's may be located within the judicial chamber, the courtroom, or in a central location depending upon the responsibilities assigned and security needs of the court. For additional information see Section 3.1.15.
<b>Staff lounge</b>	15 - 20 sf / person	For additional information see Section 3.3.
<b>Clerk of the Court</b>  Director's Private Office  Assistant Manager Office  Administrative Offices  Clerical Workstations  Counter Workstation  Cashier Workstation  Public Counters  Public Waiting Area	  250 - 325 sf  150 - 180 sf  100 - 120 sf  48 - 100 sf  24 - 32 sf  24 - 36 sf  7 - 10 sf / person  12 - 15 sf / person	  For additional information see Section 3.3.





## SECTION 3 COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

ACTIVITY AREA	MINIMUM AREA REQUIREMENTS	COMMENTS
<b>Friend of the Court</b>		For additional information see Section 3.4.
Director's Private Office	250 - 325 sf	
Assistant Friend of the Court	150 - 180 sf	
Referee's Private Office	120 - 150 sf	
Caseworkers Office	120 - 150 sf	
Clerical Workstations	48 - 100 sf	
<b>Magistrate / Referee Hearing Rooms</b>	<u>Width</u> <u>Depth</u> <u>Total Area</u>	For additional information see Section 3.6.
Formal	28 ft   30 ft   840 sf	Does not include spectator/waiting seating.
Informal - small	200 - 400 sf	Accommodates 6-12 people.
Informal - large	600 - 800 sf	Accommodates up to 20 people.
<b>Magistrate / Referee Private Office</b>	120 - 150 sf	Access from private corridor and located near the hearing room. For additional information see Section 3.6.
<b>Probation Offices</b>		For additional information see Section 3.7.
Director's Private Office	250 - 325 sf	
Probation Officers Private Office	120 - 150 sf	
Clerical Workstations	48 - 100 sf	
Cashier	24 - 36 sf	
<b>Jury Assembly</b>		For additional information see Section 3.8.1.
Assembly/Orientation Area	8 - 15 sf/juror	
Juror Waiting Area	8 - 35 sf	
<b>Law Library</b>	Variable	For additional information see Section 3.8.3.
<b>Attorney Lounge (Optional)</b>	Variable	For additional information see Section 3.8.4.
<b>Law Enforcement Waiting (Optional)</b>	25 sf/officer or 30 - 35 sf/work carrel	For additional information see Section 3.8.5.
<b>Custodial Closet</b>	70 sf	Minimum of one closet per floor. For additional information see Section 3.9.2.
<b>Telecommunications / Data Entry Rooms</b>	300 sf	For multi-floor facilities rooms should be stacked vertically. For additional information see Section 3.9.6.



## SECTION 3

### COURTHOUSE DESIGN CRITERIA

ACTIVITY AREA	MINIMUM AREA REQUIREMENTS	COMMENTS
<b>Telecommunication / Information Technology Room</b>	Variable	For additional information see Section 3.9.7.
<b>Telecommunication Closets</b>	110 sf	Multi-floor facilities should stack closets vertically. For additional information see Section 3.9.8.
<b>Electrical Closets</b>	Variable	For additional information see Section 3.9.9
<b>Mail Room</b>	Variable	Total size is determined by volume of mail, functions performed, and number of staff. Mail opening should be performed in a secured room to provide for funds security. For additional information see Section 3.9.17.
<b>Central Security Station</b>	100 sf	Total size is determined by the number of security staff to be accommodated. For additional information see Section 3.9.18.
<b>Prisoner Holding/Transport</b>		For additional information see Section 3.9.20.
Central Holding/Staging	15 sf / person for group holding. 150 sf minimum.	Located adjacent to sallyport in secured circulation area. Space does not include area necessary for staff / law enforcement control center.
Attorney/Client Meeting Booth	60 sf	Divided by security glazing.
Attorney/Client Contact Conference Room	60 - 80 sf	Separate entrances for attorney and prisoner should be provided.
Courtroom Holding	70 sf	For one prisoner individual cell. Group Courtroom Holding Cells requirements are the same as Central Holding.